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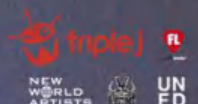
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**MARMOZETS**

Pic by Kane Hibberd





## 012 NEWS

The vital shit: Stray From The Path, Miss May I, Born Lion, Beautiful Bodies, The Getaway Plan, Relentless and more.

## 032 NECK DEEP

Five Welsh chaps from the sleepy town of Wrexham remind us why we all have a soft spot for pop-punk with their nostalgic new take on the genre.

## 034 COUNTERPARTS

Get acquainted with the next Canuck band primed and ready to take over the internet... oh, and your speakers.

## 036 DEFEATER

Massachusetts' finest hardcore export are back with the next chapter of the family saga, this time it's the priest from *Travels* confessing his sins over one hell of a relentless album.

## 044 RISE AGAINST

Rise Against have always been punks with a purpose and they are on their way back to our fair land after winning over stadiums with the Fooeys.

## 047 DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL

Calling all metalheads! We've gathered all your favourite rifflords in one handy section. Bow down to your saviours: Bullet For My Valentine, Dead Letter Circus, Disturbed, Ghost, Nile and Behemoth. Hail Satan.

## 060 BRING ME THE HORIZON

They've got spirit! Yes they do! They've got spirit! How 'bout you?! Bring Me The Horizon are back to change the game and challenge your expectations on what they should sound like.

## 062 THE BACK END

Album, film, and game reviews from the only people you can trust.

## 082 LAST GASP

He vowed he was "sick of singing about hate", but Frank Carter is back spitting piss and vinegar with his third act The Rattlesnakes.





**High Tension**

Pic by Kane Hibberd

# BLUNT

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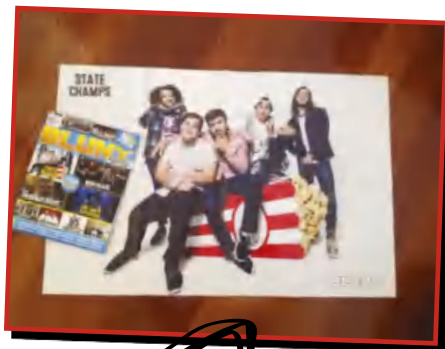




## letter of the month

### Amy via Email

Hey there! I've been a fan of heavy metal ever since I was 12 (I'm now 19) and I went to Soundwave in Sydney this year. Holy fuck it was amazing. I live in a small, backwards town where the music I like is difficult to find. Although they do sell your mags here and my room is covered... And I mean covered in posters. Three of my four walls are done. Anyway, I met Terror Universal and they were the best bunch of guys I've ever met. I also met Ariel Bloomer from Icon For Hire, and Falling In Reverse. It was the best thing to ever happen to me. Anyway, I would so appreciate it if you could put a Terror Universal or Icon For Hire poster in one of your mags. If not, well at least you know the best bands to put in there anyway. Thanks a lot!



### sfamabbey via Twitter

Bought the new copy of @bluntmag today. I can't wait to hang my new poster of @state\_champs @dereksteez!



### \_just\_bad\_ via Twitter

Pile of mags i'm yet to read (pile of read mags even bigger) @kerrangmagazine @rocksound @bluntmag @hysteria\_mag

### state\_champs via Twitter

@bluntmag Is a blunt poster like a blunt wrap? But allows for a way bigger blunt?

### conspiracyflame via Twitter

Thank you @bluntmag: I turned 18 today and found out that I won tickets to the @yellowcard and @maydayparade show on Saturday! Bring it on!!!

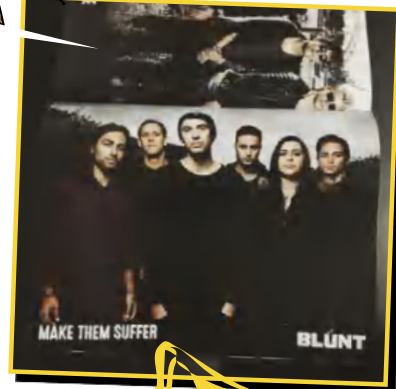


Catch up on all the latest **BLUNT** goodness from in and around the web. Keep in touch!



### andy\_baesack via Instagram

Just starting my posters :) Thanks @bluntmagazine! #BlackVeilBrides #RonnieRadke #AndyBiersack #SWS #BluntMagazine



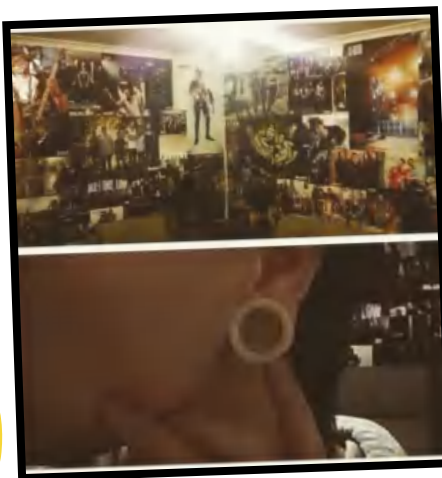
### chrisariasreal via Instagram

@makethemsufferau in this month's @bluntmagazine poster edition. You know what to do. P.S. Black shirt not included #MakeThemSuffer #BluntMagazine



### anathemists via Twitter

Made a good purchase to add to my @bluntmag collection today. I've wanted a @state\_champs poster for ages!



### havenadele via Instagram

Sorry for being away for so long. Whilst I was internet deprived, I rearranged my posters and stretched my lobes to 22mm #BluntMagazine #TwistedMagazine

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### LETTER OF THE MONTH CONTRIBUTORS RECEIVE A ...

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SO YOU  
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## CREATIVE DIRECTOR WITH JOSEPH CALDERAZZO

Joseph Calderazzo, the artistic mind behind the long-running Led Zeppelin tribute show, *Whole Lotta Love*, and a musician in his own right, talks us through how he came to be a creative director and the head of boutique agency Contemprée/Calderazzo Entertainment.

Photo by Sandra Markovic



#### How did you come to get your start in the music industry?

I guess I just morphed into it: I played in my first band when I was 15 and just went from there. It was a natural process and I've been full-time on and off ever since.

#### What does your day-to-day job involve?

My business (CC Entertainment) puts on a couple of high-end homage shows per year and I do lots of general gigs as well, plus some teaching and sessions. Between the 2014-2015 financial year, I managed to do over 300 live gigs. So a lot of my time is taken up with lots of emailing, phone calls, booking musicians, booking crew, booking production, rehearsal rooms, accommodation, flights, rental cars, hire equipment, work sheets, speaking to agents and venue operators, learning songs and then if there's any time left, I'll do some general practice on my instrument. In short, gigs take a lot of preparation and organisation to make them happen.

#### What have been the highlights of your job?

The highlights are usually the live gigs, so for me, playing theatres and outdoor concerts around Australia, and also gigs in Japan and North America. I must mention that there have been some amazing musicians and

artists that I've worked with and have come to know which goes beyond highlight status.

#### What have been the lowlights?

Not knowing where the gig is coming from, having to deal with people in the music industry who lack integrity and are generally not in the business for the right reasons, and the constant battle between evaluating self-worth and a healthy ego (heavy, I know).

#### Tell BLUNT one thing about your job that most people would never guess.

It's NOT glamorous! It's HARD work! You HAVE to be resilient!

#### Who has been your favourite artist to work with and why?

I've worked with so many artists and they all leave me with something; if I had to choose one, it would be Jenny Morris. I was Jenny's guitarist for 10 years and apart from her being a beautiful human and being very easy to work with, she taught me a lot about humility which is a very important quality to develop generally, but especially in a creative industry. **B**

**f** josephcalderazzomusic

**ig** josephcalderazzo

**tw** joseph\_joseph

GETTING  
TO KNOWNATHAN WYNER  
OF A SECRET DEATH

#### I first discovered music when...

I was in high school listening to triple j and watching *Recovery* on ABC in the morning. I got onto heavier music when I'd go to Scott's [Reid, guitar] house and we'd play *Doom* on his brother's PC. His brother would crank Pantera and Metallica while we chucked a '90s bedroom mosh.

#### I realised being in a band was the best way to waste time when...

I was in high school. Scott and I would spend our weekends trying to outdo

each other on guitar. Then we started jamming with Scott's brother on the drums and a school mate on bass. It was awesome.

#### My first band was...

Buckwhead's Pyjamas. Scott had moved onto drums and I was playing guitar and sang. We were horrible. We played fast pop-punk and then we slowly started to move onto heavier stuff once I learned to scream. When Scott was writing the songs, we stopped sucking.

#### The first show I ever played was...

With Buckwhead's Pyjamas at The Playroom. It was a jam night and there was no one there. Probably for the best – we were woeful. I can't remember much else other than Scott wearing a homemade skivvy with the band name drawn on it.

#### The worst job I've ever had is...

Working as a removalist in the UK for two days. I worked with two Polish dudes and I couldn't understand anything they said. I quickly learned Polish curse words though. They yelled at each other a lot and I had to sit in between them in a cramped van. I earned the equivalent to \$14 an hour and realised how strong I am not.

#### My favourite band is...

Neurosis maybe? There's too many to choose from but I remember the first time I heard *Times Of Grace* (1999). It shattered my soul with how heavy it was. 17-year-old me had never heard anything like it.

#### A band that should never have broken up are...

The Rivalry or The Abandonment. In my opinion, they're two of Australia's best heavy bands. I got to see The Abandonment this year do a one-off reunion show and it was incredible.

#### One album I play before I hit the stage is...

Temper T because he's the most psyched up person on the planet. He's legitimately insane and I'm pretty sure he makes up all of these words that have no meaning but rhyme enough to make a song.

#### My favourite tour memory is...

Anytime we'd play The Arthouse in Melbourne. We used to stay in one of the big rooms upstairs with whoever we were playing with and just get hammered. I'll never forget how much fun we had in that place and it's such a shame that it's no longer around. **B**



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# FOR FUCK'S SAKE, GO ASK AUNTIE SLATTS

Each issue King Parrot's intrepid bass player, part-time detective and alleged sex offender Slatts Everyday answers the big questions as posed by you. To get involved, use the hashtag #askauntieslatts and ask away. Please note we are not liable for any terrible or irresponsible advice he almost definitely will be sharing.



Hey Auntie Slatts m8,  
Everyone at my new school  
thinks I'm a drug dealer and that  
I stabbed somebody at my old  
school. What the fuck do I do?  
Lucy via bluntnmag.com.au

Lucy, this is awesome! What the fuck do you do?? It should be fairly obvious, deary – get some 28 inch spinners on your BMX or at the very least some gold spoke dokeys and start slinging 'caine. Why stop there – grab yourself a rockin' pimp fedora and a real seal fur full-length jacket and start running prostitutes as a side business to your drug-selling stabbing enterprise.

*Luv your favourite Aunt who deserves a cut of all profits xx*

Yo Auntie Slatts,  
I've been trying to work this one out: Why won't ol' Tones legalise gay marriage here in Oz? It's scary to think that we're behind the USA on something like this.  
Phil via bluntnmag.com.au

Ol' Tones has put Australia behind the USA because he has a jailhouse mentality that "You're only gay if you take it" but the fact is, we're all gay, we're all hetero and who gives a flying fuck unless of course flying fucks are your bag in which case legalise flying fucks too. Governments and religions have no right to tell you where to put your bits or who you choose to be miserable with for the rest of your life.

*Rainbow kisses, Auntie Slatts*

Hi Auntie Slatts,  
From one lass to another – how do you take the perfect selfie?  
Alison via bluntnmag.com.au

Alison my darling, the key is to quit your job/study and focus. Who needs an education or a salary when you can get likes on your desired social media outlet? Answer – no one. I eat likes daily, that's how I maintain such a healthy figure with healthy skin and a full head of hair. Now you've got the time, you need just take shit-loads of selfies and post them all because you know what Alison? Every single one is perfect with you in it

*Auntie S xx*

Hey Auntie Slatts,  
I've gotta fill in for a mate's band at a small gig they're playing. As a lord of the four-string yourself, how do I get really good at bass guitar in two weeks?  
Mike via bluntnmag.com.au

Mike, your Aunt is an expert on this. Fact is, "really good at bass guitar" is not even a real sentence – no one actually gives a fuck about the bass; most nights I'm not even plugged in because I can't be fucked bending over to plug shit in and no one ever seems to notice so my advice to you is don't sweat it. Concentrate on looking good – that's the most important thing. Good luck on the old three-string, mate (or however many it's got).

*Auntie S xx*

## TOP 5 EXCUSES FOR NOT GOING TO WORK ON MONDAY

⚡ SORRY BOSS, I'VE GOT CAT AIDS.

⚡ MY GIRLFRIEND/BOYFRIEND STABBED ME IN THE PENIS/VAGINA.

⚡ SOMEONE STOLE MY SELFIE STICK AND THE POLICE SAID I SHOULDN'T GO TO WORK.

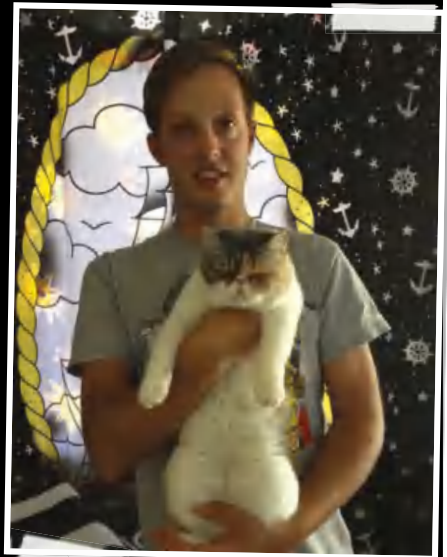
⚡ I DON'T HAVE ANY DATA LEFT ON MY MOBILE PHONE, WHICH MEANS I CAN'T USE MAPS – AND I DON'T REMEMBER WHERE WORK IS.

⚡ I QUIT.



## A Band's Best Friend WITH MICK LORD OF CAPTIVES

Behind every great band there's an even cuter puppy, so it's time to meet the loveable critters waiting to greet your favourite acts as they stumble through the door after a brutal bout of touring. We'll be treating you to the friendliest and furriest, and this issue we've got Mick Lord from Captives and his cuddly little furball Bette Davis.



**Pet's Name:** Bette Davis  
**Nicknames:** McFluffens, Squishy, Peppa Pig.  
**Age:** One.  
**Sex:** Female.  
**Breed:** Exotic Shorthair.

**How you met:** She was a present my girlfriend surprised me with when I got home from tour.

**Favourite food:** Mince balls shaped like testicles.

**Most annoying habit:** Leaving fluff everywhere.

**Most endearing habit:** Catching flies and eating their brains.

**Usually found:** Sunbaking nude on the lounge.

**Biggest fuck up:** The time she broke a full-length mirror.

**Most touching moment:** The time she shat in the bath when she was four months old.

**The most embarrassing thing you do with your pet when nobody's looking:** Share the milk from my cereal with her.

**My pet shits all over your pet because:** She can leap a building (made of Lego) in a single bound to catch flies of any size no matter where they are!

NEED MORE AUNTIE SLATTS AND HIS MATES IN YOUR LIFE? FOLLOW @WSLATTZ AND @KINGPARROTBAND ON INSTAGRAM.



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# IN HEARTS WAKE



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# JUSTICE CREW

Stray From The Path have taken on the challenge of topping their gargantuan breakthrough record, and somehow managed not to self-destruct in the process.

Words by Daniel Furnari.



So you've slugged away for 14 years in an underground band before finally breaking through on your seventh album. You've taken said record on a few laps around the world, played bigger shows than you had ever imagined and life is looking peachy... right up until you realise it's time to write another album. "Oh my god, I wanted to die... It was terrible!" laughs Stray From The Path guitarist Tom Williams. "I mean, we wrote *Villains* in a garage when we were kids, and no one cared about it. We wrote the next record in Misha [Mansoor] from Periphery's apartment – no one really gave a fuck about it. We did *Rising Sun*, and a few kids had started to care, and then when we wrote *Anonymous* suddenly it all just blew up. We've been writing records

**"NO ONE TOUCHES WHITE PRIVILEGE IN AMERICA RIGHT NOW EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUCH A HUGE PROBLEM."**  
**TOM WILLIAMS**

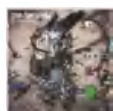
with no fanbase for all this time, and now we have this fanbase, what are we gonna do?!" Writing and jamming a large amount of the material during soundchecks over their relentless touring schedule proved difficult at times, which Williams explains led to some turmoil within the band's ranks. Although he assures us all is harmonious now, things got a little heated in the endeavour to step up their game. "We had a big blowout at a show in South Carolina, screaming at each other, and we don't do that – we were always the band that made fun of bands who fight. We've all been best friends for years! But I felt like they didn't understand the kind of pressure that was on us. I was telling them, 'You guys have to bring it! This record needs to be better!'" "I'll never forget, the next time we went into the studio, Drew [York, vocals] showed me a loose-leaf piece of paper with lyrics all over it, and on the top it said 'Outbreak' in big letters, and I was like, 'This, this is what I'm talking

about motherfucker!' He finally brought it – the whole band did! We really beat ourselves up writing this record and it paid off."

That same track, "Outbreak", became the record's hard-hitting first single, a scathing attack on America's pharmaceutical industry (who Williams says "don't treat illnesses, they just create returning customers"). It's just one of many controversial topics covered on the record, the sort that listeners have come to expect from the always outspoken band. Titles like "First World Problem Child" show Stray From The Path at their most forthright, dealing with racial issues in an uncompromising fashion.

"No one touches white privilege in America right now even though it's such a huge problem," states Williams. "I have debates with fans online a lot, kids saying things like, 'Black people always want to pull the race card when they get arrested'. But they don't know the first thing about being a black person in America. They're privileged and they don't understand. And likewise, I'm privileged too, and that's why I feel it is my duty to say, 'Yo, there are people in this world not getting the same things I'm getting.'"

Of course, this no-punches-pulled approach to social issues doesn't come without a cost – the band have earned their fair share of enemies for speaking their minds, but for Williams and co. the need to shed light on injustice trumps all, especially in the current climate. "When 'Badge And A Bullet' came out, kids were saying stuff like, 'Fuck you guys, I'm burning all my Stray shirts now, my dad's a cop, how dare you' – but what does your dad have to do with a pregnant woman getting punched in the stomach by some other cop? I don't know why they think they're the ones being attacked. These arguments come from people who are protected by the privileges we're talking about and are afraid to lose them. If you don't like what we're singing about on this record, you're eventually not gonna like something on a future record, so you may as well stop listening now!" **B**



**SUBLIMINAL CRIMINALS**  
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## THE BUNNY THE BEAR

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

Honestly, none. I pretty much started this band and came up with the name out of nowhere, so it all just pretty much popped into mind at the same time.

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

Buffalo, New York. I guess it would have to be Niagara Falls.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Haley Roback (vocals, scariest driver Matt's ever been in the car with);  
Matt Tybor (vocals).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

Ah, that's a hard one. I take a lot of influence from my son and just problems I'm working on overcoming in my life.

**What's the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

Someone's probably teasing another for messing up.

**What's your pre-show warm-up routine?**

I eat a carrot and stand on my head for 12.2 minutes.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

I could never pick out one; we have had a bunch of amazing shows thanks to our amazing fanbase and the amazing people we work with.

**What band would you most like to share the stage with and why?**

Brand New. I have an obsession. I just got a tattoo of one of their album covers.

**What is your latest release and why should we buy it?**

Our newest album, *A Liar Wrote This*, came out in July via Victory Records. I would say to pick it up because I think it's something quite different overall than what you are finding in our "scene" with a lot of music lately. I think it pushes boundaries in some respects of what people would say is the right and wrong direction to go in.



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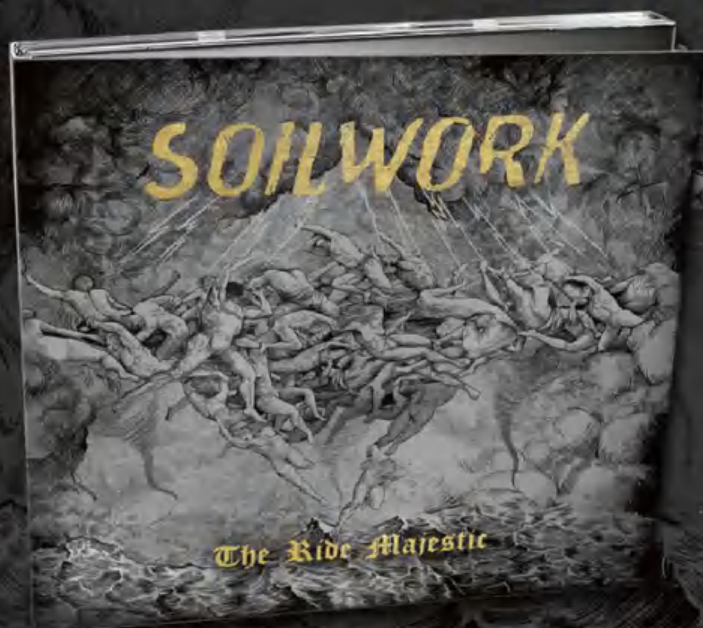
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# IN DEATHLESS TRADITION

Individual and collective frustrations led to metalcore crew Miss May I unleashing their "first really pissed off album". Vocalist Levi Benton gets heavy with **BLUNT**.

Words by **Brendan Crabb**.



**R**egularly issuing fresh product can be crucial nowadays (unless you're Tool, an entity well and truly unto themselves), and Ohio metalcore act Miss May I only enjoyed a brief interval between studio visits recently. New disc *Deathless* was produced by in-demand knob twiddlers Joey Sturgis and Nick Sampson, and it quickly follows 2014's chart-bothering *Rise Of The Lion*. Frontman Levi Benton emphasises a primary reason for the swift turnaround was seeking to have substantial new music available – not merely a deluxe edition of an existing release – in accordance with their main stage slot on the US Vans Warped Tour. But there was additional, pertinent motivation. "We just had a really rough couple of years. I lost my house, our drummer got a divorce... just personal stuff within the band. Then contract stuff with big

**"THIS MIGHT BE THE RECORD THAT BUSTS US OUT OF JUST BEING A BIG DIRECT SUPPORT BAND, AND BEING AN ACTUAL HEADLINING BAND."**  
**LEVI BENTON**

companies. A bunch of stuff was happening, and a lot of people's hands were getting into stuff. There was a few months where we just didn't know what we were going to do. I think that's why this record came out and talking to each other really got us to the point of being able to do the record. Us all being, not in a negative mood, but we were pretty pissed at how everything was going. I think that's why this record came out to be our first really pissed off album. We've always been a heavy band, but we were always positive and optimistic... I think the aggression really came through because it's real."

Miss May I channelled a somewhat more purist metal outlook under the tutelage of renowned producer

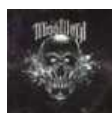
Terry Date (Pantera, Soundgarden) on *Rise Of The Lion*, but reuniting with long-time friend Sturgis (who manned their first two records) signals a greater focus on a beatdown-based, mosh-friendly approach – a manoeuvre some may perceive as calculated. "He hadn't done a band like us in a while, and we hadn't worked with a producer like him in a while. So we felt like there were a lot of ideas being built up over the years that we didn't really get to express. I think it's the same sound that we've always had, it just sounds more in-your-face and breakdown-y with Joey. 'Cos if we did *Rise...* with Joey, it would have come out sort of the same, just with a different production quality. He makes a really in-your-face and heavy production."

Benton also notes Sturgis' more hands-on environment. "We didn't really have engineers; like with Terry there were engineers. It was more of a 'big project' vibe with Terry than it was just a personal vibe with Joey. They both have their pros and cons. With Joey, we were right under his bedroom at his house doing vocals, in a little office, and I was two feet away from him. With Terry, we were in like a 10,000 square foot studio in downtown Seattle, and I was in a vocal booth."

Miss May I, sufficiently versatile to straddle various worlds such as Warped and the metal-centric Rockstar Mayhem Festival, have significant aspirations for *Deathless'* cycle.

"We've been playing direct support for big bands for years, but we never really got to be the headlining band. I think it's because we never really had a record that was just full of great songs.

"We've had some great records, but you could definitely pick the singles out. This record, we actually had arguments over how many singles there were. So I think this might be the record that busts us out of just being a big direct support band, and being an actual headlining band." **B**



**DEATHLESS**  
**IS OUT NOW ON RISE/WARNER.**



## MEAT WAVE

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

The Punx, The Rejectz, and Oozing Wound.

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

Chicago, Illinois and it's pretty famous for hot dogs.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Joe Gac (bass, great at knowing what's wrong with the van and other mechanical/technical issues); Chris Sutter (vocals, guitar, great at finding Wi-Fi); Ryan Wigniak (drums, great at finding Wi-Fi).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

Finding food nearby, Devo, and Dale's Pale Ale.

**What's the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

Internet hubbub and trolls.

**What's your pre-show warm-up routine?**

Finding food nearby, firing up some Dale's.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

Our show in London last January at the Shackwell Arms blew our minds. Still can't believe that show.

**What band would you most like to share the stage with and why?**

We just played with Ex Hex and they were an absolute delight. It was so fun; they're just the perfect band. So I'm gonna say Ex Hex.

**What is your latest release and why should we buy it?**

After releasing an EP earlier this year, we've signed to SideOneDummy and our new full-length, *Delusion Moon*, is out September 18. It's very good.

**If you could be endorsed by one company, who would it be?**

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# NOT-SO-LITTLE LION MEN

**Not five seconds of summer, nor fifteen minutes of fame: Sydney's Born Lion are here for the long run, as bassist Nathan Mulholland explains to BLUNT.**

Words by Dave Drayton. Photo by Sandra Markovic.



In the eyes of many, Sydney rock quartet Born Lion had an enviable and swift ascension through the ranks – radio support for singles, a spot on Soundwave and numerous other choice supports, not least of which being The Bronx, whose influence on the band is unmissable.

Given the hype and the hoopla, it's a little strange that it took so long for their debut album, *Final Words*, to arrive, courtesy of FOUR|FOUR. Despite the title, Nathan Mulholland assures us the band are far from done, and that's what caused the delay.

**“THERE’S NO POINT CHASING ALL THIS HYPE IF IT BURNS EVERYONE OUT.”**  
**NATHAN MULHOLLAND**

“We really worked hard on striking a balance between sustainability as a band and striking while the iron is hot. There’s no point chasing all this hype if it burns everyone out and we end up like, ‘Fuck, I just don’t want to do it anymore.’

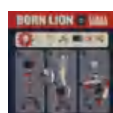
“Regardless of the radio play, or the people who wanted to see more from us, if that had of burnt us out – which it had the potential to do because of the age we are, you know, we’re all in our 30s; we’re not living like 20-year-olds anymore. Pulling everything back I think really helped for us, and it shows on the album. I think that we managed to get 11 songs across the board that I feel are all really great songs.”

Those songs were recorded in bursts with engineer and producer Dave Hammer at his Def Wolf Studios where comparable noisemakers Gay Paris, Glitter Canyon, and Hell City Glamours have all previously worked.

Mulholland cut his teeth in Town Hall Steps – “Who doesn’t remember Town Hall Steps? It’ll haunt me forever,” he jokes – and learned a thing or two about how not to tour sustainably in the process.

“We went on tour with Avril Lavigne and Hilary Duff and Simple Plan – it was a big pop thing. Like 5 Seconds Of Summer before 5 Seconds Of Summer happened, on a much, much smaller scale. After that I played in a band called Kiai Academy and again we were just gung-ho about everything. I just thought it was all about killing yourself on the road – that that was how bands did it, just going for as long as you could until everything broke down and your life no longer worked anymore. I honestly thought that’s what being in a band was about, so I just did it that way. We slept in airports, vans, and in the Adelaide University annexe once. It’s still how it’s done with some bands, but as you start to get older that sustainability element becomes a factor – we don’t want our bodies breaking down so much, the other guys in the bands have kids... We would rather still be a band in five, maybe 10 years than have this flash of doing everything and then it going away. This band’s sustainability is really important.”

Some things, like pop-punk support slots, never change: the day after *Final Words* hit the shelves, the band embarked on a national tour supporting Yellowcard. “I’m making all my high school friends jealous,” laughs Mulholland. Other things just get a little more grown up. “I was stoked – we got offered it the night before my wedding, so I was up and we had a conference call with the all the guys in the band and I was excited to get offered these shows with what’s now like a big stadium rock band.”



**FINAL WORDS**  
**IS OUT NOW ON FOUR|FOUR.**



## ROYAL CHANT

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

Sleeper, The Sonnets, Screen Test, Smack, Otter, Smear...

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

The band is originally from Port Macquarie (though now we’re mostly based in Sydney), and there’s a ton of kangaroos and koalas everywhere. And... sand.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Mark Spence (vocals, drums, guitar, cat-sitter); James Carthew (vocals, guitar, often builds robots as part of his day job); Ryan Stuart (bass, runs marathons voluntarily).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

Guided By Voices, Sonic Youth, and R.E.M.

**What’s the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

Boring band business stuff like, “We should get some new press shots”. “Yeah, we should...” Band meeting concludes with cigarettes and no arrangements made regarding press shots. Very productive.

**What’s your pre-show warm-up routine?**

Attempt to arrive on time, make up excuses as to why we didn’t, haul way too much gear up way too many steps, attempt a half-arsed line-check, James smokes, Mark grabs drinks and Ryan warms up for his silky bass lines.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

Opening for Bob Mould (Hüsker Dü, Sugar) on his last tour of Australia. Seeing him live made me realise how influential his music has been on the modern alt-rock landscape. I got to meet him backstage and of course turned into a complete stunned mullet as I asked for his autograph. The real bonus was meeting his fans, many of whom came away as new Royal Chant listeners because they sensed a common musical thread.

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# BATTLE ROYAL

Thomas Becker, guitarist/drummer for the Epitaph-approved Beautiful Bodies, snuck between the tour buses at Warped to tell us what happens when punk rock and politics collide.

Words by Emily Swanson.



There's nothin' like the smell of Warped Tour in the morning. If you're an alternative band eyeing off scene stardom, the US summer festival is a well-worn rite of passage. And for a band like Kansas City's Beautiful Bodies, a polished EDM-punk hybrid renowned for their energetic live shows, it's the perfect setting to show off their shiny new album, *Battles*.

"I feel like it's super generic to say, but it literally is like summer camp for punk rockers," Thomas Becker says of the tour. "The album's only been out a month digitally, and it's weird; we'll go to these towns and places we've never played, and kids are singing along. They know the lyrics better than our singer Alicia [Solombrino]," he laughs. Remarkably, the burgeoning success Beautiful Bodies have

seen in just a few short years isn't the most impressive feat Becker can put his name to. Before being signed to prominent punk label Epitaph and following a stint behind the kit with short-lived alt-rockers Gratitude, Becker found the time to go to law school. Harvard Law School.

"I'm a human rights lawyer so I was living in Bolivia working on this case against the ex-president," the guitarist/drummer begins, as not many others do. "I decided I was going to take a break from music and commit to activism, so I decided to go to law school and moved down to South America. I wasn't planning on suing the ex-president initially," he chuckles. The punk genre has always been one for luring intellectual outsiders and for Becker, punk rock and politics have always been inextricably linked. "I grew up in a rougher part of town in Kansas City so I saw a lot of inequality, but I think punk rock through anarchism and criticism helped me put it into a political context," he considers. "The people that are on the fringes and think outside the box? To me, that's punk rock. I've been involved in a lot of different social movements – I worked with a lot of guerrilla and leftist

groups in Latin America which kind of drew me to Bolivia, and when I was there, I met a bunch of victims who'd had family members killed by the ex-president. He fled to the US, so we thought, 'It's bullshit he's using the United States as a safe haven. Let's go after the fucker'. We decided to launch a lawsuit and somehow I became a human rights lawyer."

Despite Becker's modesty when it comes to his day job, he seems to have this law business down-pat: a Supreme Court case he worked in Bolivia has seen the generals involved in the mass murders of civilians jailed for genocide. As for the country's former president? Justice is on the way via a travelling punk rock show. "Just two hours ago I was on a phone call to Bolivia. Warped Tour...

It's one of the hardest places to do international legal phone calls." Given the fact that festival reception has oft stood in the way of a timely meet-up with mates at the main stage, we can barely begin to fathom Becker's cellular difficulties, let alone the peculiar coming together of his two worlds.

"I'll be on a call to Bolivia and I Killed The Prom Queen will be shredding in the background, just like metalcore screaming, and I try to explain it to these folks in Bolivia, but they have no concept of what the Warped Tour is and most of them honestly haven't been out of their village or the neighbouring village. They're just like, 'What in the fuck are you doing?' So I'm still juggling the law stuff, you know, sneaking between buses like I'm doing now and doing legal work when I'm not playing music or sitting at the merch tent. It's worked out so far, but it's been bizarre for sure."



**BATTLES**  
IS OUT NOW ON EPITAPH/WARNER.



## THE HAZY CHAINS

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

Hazy Chains without the 'the' until we realised the initials.

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

We're from Blacktown in Sydney, so the landmark might be the Masonic Center, which is where Kait first started going to see shows.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Father Yod (drums, consuming excessive amounts of original Doritos); Kait Hudson (vocals, percussion, guitar, telepathy).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

Janis Joplin because she is a legend and was really open and honest with how she felt in her lyrics, Nirvana with their anger and simple guitar riffs, and Nine Inch Nails with the dark element.

**What's the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

Usually recommending tunes to check out or teasing each other.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

Playing the Australian Hall was pretty groovy. We had a guy in a cheerleading dress MCing and everyone was dancing during our set, which is what we love.

**What band would you most like to share the stage with and why?**

Led Zeppelin! That would be legendary. Plus Kait is in love with Robert Plant.

**What is your latest release and why should we buy it?**

Our debut EP *Orb*. You should buy it because, "It is the most amazing EP in this world to date" – Dalai Lama.

**If you could be endorsed by one company, who would it be?**

Yod is saying Bonds. He is thinking of all the free underwear. We'll just go with that.



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# HORSIN' AROUND

The Getaway Plan have a new line-up, no record label, and their third album – frontman Matthew Wright gives **BLUNT** the tip on *Dark Horses*.

Words by Dave Drayton.



It's been a turbulent decade or so for The Getaway Plan. Starting life as an emotionally charged metalcore act, the Melbourne band were swiftly swept up by Boomtown Records, who released their debut EP, 2006's *Hold Conversation*. The transformation from there to the rock-infused pop act the band are today began with their first LP, *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, and its enormous – and enormously successful – lead single “Where The City Meets The Sea”. Then came turmoil surrounding the ousting and eventual conviction of the band's former

**“IF THINGS FUCK UP, YOU DON'T HAVE SOMEONE TO PUSH THE BLAME ONTO YOU, AND YOU LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES.”**  
**MATTHEW WRIGHT**

tour manager for numerous sexual offenses; the band's break-up; the side projects (frontman Matthew Wright with indie pop act Young Heretics, guitarist Clint Ellis doing a stint in The Amity Affliction, and founding drummer Aaron Barnett with DeeZ Nuts); and a series of odd toes dipped back into the water – an excessively produced and grandiose second album, plus small runs of shows.

In a 2012 interview Matthew Wright, discussing a rural run of shows, explained how reinvigorating it was to do a tour with a smaller crew, telling *The Music*: “We just felt like stripping things back for a run and getting down to work again, instead of rocking up to shows at sound check and not having to touch your gear when you leave – you kind of feel like a piece of shit after a while of doing that. We wanted to do it ourselves this time round. It suited the regional run we're doing.” The Getaway Plan family continued to shrink; bassist

David Anderson left, as did his eventual replacement Jase Clarke. Trimming the fat further when it came to management, labels, and other peripheral associates decreased the distance between the band and their fanbase, but also, and equally crucial, between them and the blame.

“Every single side of the business we have to look after: the financial side, all these things we've always had other people there to do for us – we are taking on those roles now because there's no one else to do it for us. It works so much better because if things fuck up, you don't have someone to push the blame onto you, and you learn from your mistakes, you know? It's so easy when you have a team of people working for you to go, ‘You fucked up, don't do that again’ and then no one really learns from their mistakes. Now we're the only ones to blame,” says Wright, one of two founding members to remain, alongside Ellis.

It's also allowed the band to exercise more control of who they work alongside, in all facets: they took local rapper Freed's out on their most recent tour, and he guests on the jazzy “Parallels”, and fellow tour partner Samuel K (of Gatherer) was the producer for the record. So who are The Getaway Plan now? Wright and Ellis have been joined by siblinged rhythm section Dan and Mike Maio, and the four have delivered the independently released and crowd-funded *Dark Horses*. The obvious connotation of the title is the success of the unknown or unexpected competitor, an idea explored in the title track, though there is much of the album that explores the identity of the band now. “‘Exodus’ especially is a message from the band to a few people that we've dealt with in our career,” says Wright, with just a hint of menace, of the near-eight-minute epic that closes out the album. **B**



**DARK HORSES**  
IS OUT NOW INDEPENDENTLY.



## HOTEL BOOKS

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

At first we called it Sons Of Empire, but realised that sounds like a fantasy metal band.

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

We're from Porterville, California. Our main landmark would be Yosemite National Park.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Cam Smith (vocals, Tetris playing); Dan Colasanto (drums, beatboxing and sound effects); Kaleb Thibeau (guitar, sleeping in and getting ready in 10 seconds).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

Modest Mouse, Nada Surf, and whatever Ben Gibbard is writing.

**What's the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

If we're on the west coast it's “Let's go to Del Taco”. If we're on the road rehearsing elsewhere it's “Why can't there be a Del Taco close by?”

**What's your pre-show warm-up routine?**

We pray as a group, then empty our pockets so we don't injure ourselves with our keys. A safe band is a happy band.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

When I was flying out for our Europe tour, the flight was delayed and I showed up super late with no sleep at all. We played a midnight set at New Noise Festival on a small stage after the headliner, so I thought nobody would show up. As I began the first poem, there were a few hundred people standing and waiting to hear what I had to say. It was an experience I will never forget.

**What is your latest release and why should we buy it?**

A vinyl featuring two EPs called *I'm Almost Happy Here, But I Never Feel At Home*. It was our first full-band release and is symbolic of big changes in our lives.



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# PAIN FOR PLEASURE

With a pummelling new full-length set to hit next month, Relentless frontman Trent Baldock fills **BLUNT** in on the modern Australian hardcore scene and keeping the DIY dream alive.

Words by Chris Neill.




You give us a six-month advantage to write a record with no tours and we'll still be getting stuff ready the night before, cramming like an HSC student," jokes Relentless frontman Trent Baldock. "That's how our writing process is; we work better under pressure." While one never really outgrows the last-minute cramming session, the Sydney hardcore outfit came into their upcoming full-length, *Price Of Pain*, with a little bit more maturity than they had before. Recorded late last year, the band wanted to hit the studio with as many established ideas as possible, undertaking roughly a week-and-a-half of preproduction – the most preparation they've ever done for an album. The band

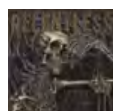
**"THE INTERNET IS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO AUSTRALIAN HARDCORE."**  
**TRENT BALDOCK**

enlisted the help of Terror drummer Nick Jett to help record and produce the album, and Baldock notes that hiring Jett – who produced their previous record *Turn The Curse* – was an absolute no-brainer. "The way that we get along with him, not even on a professional level, it just feels good to hang out with a friend. He'll sit down with us and if he thinks something's bad, he'll tell us to our face. He helped us through every aspect of recording." While it's been roughly two years since Relentless' last record, the frontman has been keeping plenty busy running his own label, Dogfight Records. Founded back in 2008 and originally set to be a booking company for lesser-known Australian punk and hardcore acts, Baldock realised that he can help expose these acts by not only helping them book shows but by also putting their records out too – and maybe a few Relentless ones along the way.

"You could say that the only reason we started it was to release our own music, but with it you get to be 100 percent DIY – you call all the shots, you decide what track gets released first – and from there it really grew into something."

You can hear the unbridled joy in Baldock's voice as he excitedly notes that he's organising his 20th release for later this year. From forming his own label to supporting local businesses by making sure he uses friends' companies when making merch and hiring gear, Baldock is a huge supporter of Australian-grown music. All this aside, he's a man who loves everything about hardcore, from the music to the kinship felt by fellow punters – especially in such a close-knit scene like the Australian one.

"It's a place of freedom, a place of release. It doesn't matter what's going on in the outside world, you can escape from reality – it's a home away from home. It's helped me through a lot of places; friends I've met through the scene have become closer than blood." With this strong sense of do-it-yourself values and wanting to promote unknown Australian acts, it makes sense that Baldock has gravitated towards and embraced the Internet as a viable platform for both independent releases and international exposure. "From Myspace to Bandcamp, the Internet is the best thing to happen to Australian hardcore," he explains with enthusiasm. "The exposure you can get from it – some band from Sydney that nobody has ever heard of can post something on YouTube and some kid over in China could end up buying the record. They might not be making any money off of it, but they're getting their music out there and there's a chance they might get picked up by a label. It's broadened the horizons of a lot of Australian bands for sure." 



**PRICE OF PAIN**  
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## CITYCOP

**What other names did you consider calling yourselves?**

Black Apple. Band name generator websites are a dangerous thing.

**Where are you from and what would be the most recognisable local landmark?**

We are from Ashtabula, Ohio. I think Bob Dylan mentioned it in a song once.

**Who is in your band, what do they play and what is their non-musical superpower?**

Eddie Gancos (vocals, feet of steel); Max Adams (guitar, vocals, toes of brittle); Cody Mikesell (drums, beard of iron); Todd Thompson (bass, lips of an angel).

**Name your three biggest influences.**

At The Drive-In, The Fall Of Troy, and Modest Mouse.

**What's the usual first topic of conversation when you take a break at rehearsal?**

Usually either going to get a beer or coming up with random, goofy songs in between serious songs.

**What's your pre-show warm-up routine?**

Stretching, beer and Limp Bizkit riffs.

**Tell us about your most memorable show.**

Kat Kat Fest in Philly a couple of years back. We played a sold out show with some awesome friends. Bled Fest was also incredible and meant a lot to us to be able to play it.

**What band would you most like to share the stage with?**

Fall Out Boy or Linkin Park, so we can personally tell them to relax and stop making music.

**What is your latest release and why should we buy it?**

Our latest release is called *Loner*. You should buy it because we put years into this record and everything surrounding it, from the artwork to the music video to every little detail. We think it is our best release yet, and most mature.

**If you could be endorsed by one company, who would it be?**

Big's Sunflower Seeds.

**Out: 07.08.15**  
Produced by Erik Rutan  
(HATE ETERNAL) at the  
Mana Recording Studios  
in Florida.

**SOUNDCHECK #1**  
in LEGACY Magazine (Germany)!

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HARDCORE IN ITS MOST **RAW, HONEST AND ANGRY** FORM!  
Available as **LTD. EDITION MINI GATEFOLD CD** and **DIGITAL ALBUM!**



# BUTCHER BABIES

**TAKE IT LIKE A MAN**

**OUT: 21.08.15**

The Butcher Babies have  
returned with their most abrasive  
and aggressive offering yet!

Produced by Logan Mader  
(Five Finger Death Punch / Gojira / Fear Factory)



# DEAD LORD

**HEADS HELD HIGH VÖ: 21.08.15**

10 songs of solid no-bogus, face-melting, twin-guitar, smart-rock action.  
The mission was to rock. It still is.



# SPOCK'S BEARD

*The Oblivion Particle*

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Nine new original songs from California prog rock legend Spock's Beard!  
Produced, mixed and mastered once more by sonic wizard Rich Mouser!

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**NEED SOME NEW TUNES  
FOR THE WARMER  
MONTHS AHEAD? WE'VE  
GOT YOU COVERED WITH  
THIS MONTH'S 17-TRACK  
MISH MOSH SAMPLER CD.  
KEEP IT BRUTAL.**



**1 BURIED IN VERONA**  
**DONE FOR GOOD**

**Label:** UNFD

**Web:** [facebook.com/thenotoriousbiv](https://facebook.com/thenotoriousbiv)

**For Fans Of:** Slipknot, Bring Me The Horizon, Korn



**2 TEN THOUSAND**  
**THE DEPARTED**

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [tenthousand.com](https://tenthousand.com)

**For Fans Of:** Incubus, Muse, The Mars Volta



**3 BLEEDING GASOLINE**  
**LET'S GET VIOLENT**

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/bleedinggasoline](https://facebook.com/bleedinggasoline)

**For Fans Of:** Five Finger Death Punch, Pantera, Hellyeah



**4 BY THE HORNS**  
**SPIRAL**

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/bythehornsofficial](https://facebook.com/bythehornsofficial)

**For Fans Of:** Killswitch Engage, Pantera, Korn

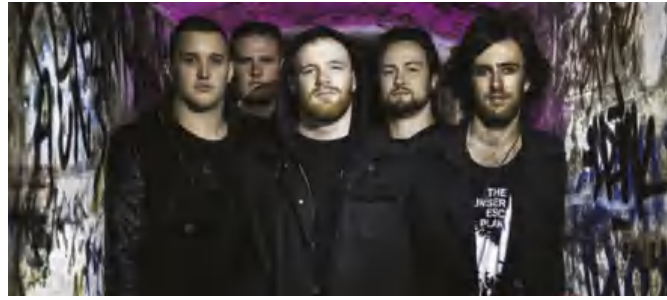


**5 HOPE STREET**  
**TAKE BLOOD**

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/tenhopestreet](https://facebook.com/tenhopestreet)

**For Fans Of:** Against Me!, The Bronx, Bouncing Souls



**6 THE ARBITRARY METHOD**  
**INTO INSANITY**

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/thearbitrarymethod](https://facebook.com/thearbitrarymethod)

**For Fans Of:** Periphery, Architects, Dead Letter Circus



## 7 WE MAY FALL VICTIMS

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/wemayfall](https://facebook.com/wemayfall)

**For Fans Of:** Parkway Drive, Architects, Bring Me The Horizon



## 8 TRACES PERSPECTIVE

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/tracesaustralia](https://facebook.com/tracesaustralia)

**For Fans Of:** Architects, Periphery, Make Them Suffer



## 9 GALLERIES IMMACULATE

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/gallerieshc](https://facebook.com/gallerieshc)

**For Fans Of:** The Ghost Inside, Defeater, letlive.



## 10 ENEMY THROTTLE SAVE ME

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/enemythrottle](https://facebook.com/enemythrottle)

**For Fans Of:** Soilwork, Threat Signal, It Dies Today



## 11 THE GATHERING STORM WINTER'S HEART

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/thegatheringstormband](https://facebook.com/thegatheringstormband)

**For Fans Of:** Epica, Dream Theater, Nightwish



## 12 ATLANTIS OF THE SKY CONSIDER ME PURPOSE

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/atlantisofthesky](https://facebook.com/atlantisofthesky)

**For Fans Of:** Suicide Silence, Bring Me The Horizon, The Devil Wears Prada



## 13 DIAMOND CONSTRUCT SKY

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/diamondconstructaus](https://facebook.com/diamondconstructaus)

**For Fans Of:** Architects, Northlane, Meshuggah



## 14 WHEN AUTUMN FOLLOWS ENEMIES

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/whenautumnfollowsau](https://facebook.com/whenautumnfollowsau)

**For Fans Of:** In Hearts Wake, Northlane, Capture The Crown



## 15 IN HYDES SHADOW DROWNED

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/inhydesshadow](https://facebook.com/inhydesshadow)

**For Fans Of:** Staind, Tremonti, Sunk Loto

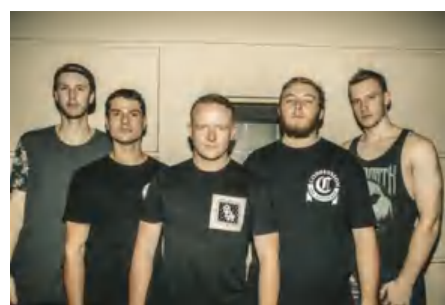


## 16 THIEVES NO SURRENDER

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/thieveshc](https://facebook.com/thieveshc)

**For Fans Of:** Gideon, The Ghost Inside, Upon A Burning Body



## 17 AWAKENED TRAITOR

**Label:** Independent

**Web:** [facebook.com/awakenedaus](https://facebook.com/awakenedaus)

**For Fans Of:** Parkway Drive, Antagonist A.D., Memphis May Fire



BURIED IN VERONA

# A Bloody Business

NOTORIOUS SYDNEY HEAVY-HITTERS BURIED IN VERONA TAKE  
ANOTHER SWING AT SUCCESS WITH A MELODIC OPUS WRITTEN,  
RECORDED AND PRODUCED ALL ON THEIR OWN.

WORDS BY LACHLAN MARKS.



**B**uried In Verona have had their fair share of bad luck. Once one of the country's most promising metalcore exports, chronic mismanagement led to a revolving membership roster and overplaying to pay off debts they allege stood at almost \$100,000. Seen as just another club band that you could catch any night of the week, the Shire-based band almost pulled the plug back in 2014, after eight years in the business, four full-length albums and heavy international touring. This year they return with *Vultures Above, Lions Below*, a melodic stadium-ready album, custom-built to silence their critics and make another proper run at building up their worldwide fanbase. There's a hell of a story behind how the album came to be and in true BIV-style even an interview with **BLUNT** involves overcoming a certain level of adversity. When frontman Brett Anderson, a carpenter by day, picks up the phone, he's nursing a fresh wound.

"I was drilling something in a wall, slipped, and the drill-bit went through my thumb. It split the nail and I'm in so much pain," he explains.

We suggest his piano career might be prematurely cut short. "Yeah, but I've gotta learn it first," he laughs.

Anderson has found himself in plenty of uncomfortable situations over the past few years. On a tour bus with Born Of Osiris in Gothenburg, Sweden last year he had to make a decision that may have stung a little harder than a banged up thumb. The driver had just turned to the passengers and explained he'd be leaving Buried In Verona behind if they didn't settle their outstanding bill. The singer had to drain all the money from his engagement ring fund in order get the band to Frankfurt, Germany to make their flight home.

"We had a schedule to pay for everything and all that stuff, but we'd been given the wrong information, the wrong schedule. We had been given a draft and not the actual one," he sighs. "I think that moment was the final straw for a couple people in the band, and I can totally understand why. I felt it. I felt the change. They just had to let go of it and go on with their personal lives."

Soon after, the remaining members of the band parted ways with their management and rumours began to spread that Buried In Verona would be hanging up the guitars for good. Looming unexplained debts and half-arsed planning had left those still standing with such a strong negative feeling about the band that Anderson admits depression became a real factor. They went their separate ways.

"We said, 'Look, if you want to write stuff go write stuff, and in a couple of months let's have another meeting and maybe shut up shop,'" he explains. "But when we had that meeting we all brought something to the table, and when we first listened to a song called 'Extraction' we all thought, we have to do a record! We thought fuck it, let's take one more shoot, just for us. If it does all end and no one else likes the record, we at least know that we ended it on the absolute best that we could possibly do and I'd be content."

Backed by new members eager to record and tour, the biggest reveal of the album is that Anderson, long pegged as the generic "screamer guy" in the modern metalcore two-man vocal line-up, has quite the set of melodic pipes on him.

Worn out from exploring only the angsty side of his emotions he approached the band about switching focus for their fifth full-length album. Members were supportive and his transformation to a full-fledged "clean" singer began. That said, the first day in the studio showing off his newfound range wasn't easy.

"I was shitting myself; microphones do not lie. There's five or six people sitting in a room and I'm standing in front of a mic with headphones on, about to sing for the very first time in front of people who I didn't know how they were going to react, so that was the most difficult and nerve-wracking thing for me. But once I looked at people's faces and saw that they were excited, I thought 'awesome' and just decided to roll with it and do the best I could. That was the hardest thing to get over, these faces staring at me thinking, 'What's he going to do?'"

*Vultures Above, Lions Below* is credited as written, recorded and produced by Buried In Verona, a feat few bands achieve. Guitarist Richie Newman stepped up as head knob-twiddler and for the first time the band was able to take their time as they began to explore the new direction they were taking vocally and musically.

"Not to sound arrogant or whatever, but we are super proud of that," Anderson exclaims. "I'll never ever go to a producer again – unless they're like my favourite producer in the world. It was all on ourselves. If you're happy with your performance then that's awesome. It's way more raw; there's less bullshit."

For mixing, they enlisted longtime collaborator Fredrik Nordström and his team in Sweden, who had produced their last three albums. They confirmed what the band had hoped: their new brand of soaring melodies and pounding rock guitars was a winner. The emails flooded back asking, "Who is this band?"

"There's no need for them to suck anyone's arse or

anything – they're amazing musicians and producers. We were over the world with their feedback."

Looking back, Anderson is glad they decided to stick it out despite the considerable setbacks. Had they ended the band then and there on a cold sidewalk in Sweden, he admits it's not something he would ever have felt comfortable discussing again.

"If I had kids who asked me, 'Dad, were you in a band?'" I think I would say no to them. It was eight, nine, ten years of my life. To just leave that in a dark place, never to be seen again after all the amazing things that did happen to it would be really sad. Now I get to look back at it and say, "You know what, I was proud of that!"

Now confident in his ability and the band surrounding him, Anderson has taken it upon himself to outline their comeback as very much a cautionary tale in the hope that young up-and-coming bands will avoid making the same mistakes they have, namely letting someone outside the band handle their financial affairs so early on in their career.

"If you're a young band or young musician just self-manage for as long as you can, until there's no way you can self-manage," he stresses. "It's a very confusing and sometimes a very deceitful industry, and if you get caught in the middle of that and make a wrong choice like we did, you can end six or seven years of your life on a bad note. "Just stay really focused, do as much as you can yourself, and when you're ready that's when people will notice you and that's when someone will come around and say, 'Hey, I can really help you'. Just trust your instincts." **B**



**VULTURES ABOVE, LIONS BELOW**  
IS OUT NOW ON UNFD.

*"If it does all end and no one else likes the record, we at least know that we ended it on the absolute best that we could do."*  
**BRETT ANDERSON**



NECK DEEP



LIFE

ON A

PLATE

**THEY'RE ONE OF POP-PUNK'S LEADING NEXT-GEN ACTS, AND NOW WELSH QUINTET NECK DEEP ARE REMINDING US WHY WE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE GENRE IN THE FIRST PLACE.**

WORDS BY EMILY SWANSON.

Pop-punk, perhaps more so than any other genre, seems to have the innate ability to be revived and reinvented in weird and wonderful ways for every generation of misguided, melody-lovin' youth. From its earliest days in the '70s, where The Ramones channelled the pop sensibilities of The Beach Boys into melodic, boppy punk rock, right through to West Coast acts like Green Day and The Offspring paving the way for full-blown mainstream domination with platinum records in the '90s, the genre has waxed and waned more times than the moon. In 2015, we seem to be right in the thick of the next great era of pop-punk: Real Friends, State Champs, Knuckle Puck and Modern Baseball are reigning supreme, and as for Welshmen Neck Deep? Well they've gone ahead and raised the bar with their nostalgia-inducing sophomore effort, *Life's Not Out To Get You*.

"A lot of bands claim that they aren't pop-punk or they don't want that label, but fuck that, why wouldn't you wanna be labelled as that?" frontman Ben Barlow questions. "That is what you are, so just own up to it and just fucking embrace it. That's what we're doing."

The five-piece, consisting of Barlow alongside guitarists Lloyd Roberts and Matt West, bassist Fil Thorpe-Evans and drummer Dani Washington, proudly wear their pop-punk loyalty on their sleeve – literally. Neck Deep's "Generic Pop Punk" merch shirts speak to their fondness for the genre, and their



pendant for the back catalogues of Blink-182 and New Found Glory. They're catching up the kids of today with the sounds of their youth, and educating a whole new generation in the process.

"With this album, we tried to really throw it back and make it sound like the music we got into as kids, the music that defined music for us, and that was straight-up pop-punk," Barlow explains. "So it was like, 'Let's fuckin' write a straight-up pop-punk record'. Things come and go all the time, especially in music. I think really, it's just waking up a new generation to this awesome music that they kind of missed the first time around. These kids didn't get into Blink and New Found and Sum 41 and Jimmy Eat World, but we did, so it's almost like we have the knowledge of the genre to be able to write music that is within it and show these kids something that up until this point, they might not have been really aware of. It's been shown that it's a really versatile genre, and it's taken on almost a different form these days."

All the beloved hallmarks of the genre are present and accounted for on *Life's Not Out To Get You*, from the introspective lyrics about growing up, girls and feeling like an outcast, to the infectious guitar melodies that carry them. Those massive hooks that have got you keenly bopping away? They come courtesy of Jeremy McKinnon, Tom Denney and Andrew Wade, the threesome (not *that* kind) behind much of A Day To Remember's discography.

"Jeremy and Wade, they were the ones that drove us to really pick apart the songs," the singer tells us. "We came to Jeremy with tons of ideas and he was stoked, he was like, 'Oh this is already more

than I could have expected' so we came in with a bunch of ideas, and they really just helped us make those ideas even better. Sometimes if he didn't have anything to add, Jeremy would just sit there, he would play *Minecraft* on his computer, then if he had an idea, he'd put his computer down and be like, 'Gimme that guitar' and he'd have a little riff. The guys really worked their balls off and gave it everything – that was why we worked with them. They said, 'No one's gonna work harder than us, no one's gonna be more stoked on this record than us', and it's true. They really came through. Jeremy gave us some awesome ideas, even ideas that he'd been saving for a long time and wanted to use himself."

Neck Deep's progression is all the more impressive when you consider the fact that they've only been a band for three years. A reputable label? They signed to Hopeless Records little more than a year into their career. The Vans Warped Tour? They've played the US leg twice. For five Welsh chaps from the sleepy town of Wrexham, they've already far exceeded what was expected of them.

"With our first album we really had to come out and impress and it almost felt like we had to write that album as the next logical step, but this one we really just had fun with it," Barlow says of his band's latest release. "We knew as soon as we were demoing the songs that they already sounded better than our other stuff and it was going in more of a direction that we wanted to go. It was going in the right direction.

"This time around, we fully dissected the songs and really took them apart and looked at how we could

# EVERYTHING'S COMING UP MILHOUSE

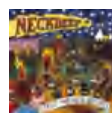


**AS YOU MIGHT HAVE ALREADY GUESSED, WE HERE AT BLUNT ARE RATHER BIG FANS OF AMERICA'S FAVOURITE YELLOW FAMILY (YOU'D PROBABLY BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND AN ISSUE WE HAVEN'T SLIPPED A SNEAKY REFERENCE INTO). BUT AS IT TURNS OUT, WE'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES...**

"I fuckin' love *The Simpsons*!" Barlow beams. "My brother, who basically showed me everything as a kid – he got me into music, skating and just the general culture of this lifestyle – his favourite fucking thing in the world is *The Simpsons*; he has an encyclopaedic knowledge of that shit, so I was brought up on a lot of *Simpsons*. I love it all, it's so satirical. I think I get it more now that I'm a little bit older. When I was younger, I just used to like the slapstick element of it and used to like the stories and how they kind of started off with one, and then went onto another thing, and then the real story would kick in. It was just well written and I get the humour now, which makes it even more enjoyable." **B**

make them better – even if it was just changing one or two chords to change the vibe a little bit. It really does feel like a Neck Deep album, and I think that's how it felt the whole time. This is an album that we always wanted to make and this is an album that is truly us."

This is the sound of the pop-punk you grew up with, given a modern spin for your listening pleasure. **B**



**LIFE'S NOT OUT TO GET YOU IS OUT AUGUST 14 THROUGH HOPELESS/UNFD.**



# Tragedy

IT WAS ALWAYS GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN A COUPLE OF ROADBLOCKS TO KEEP DOWN THE TOUGH-AS-NAILS MOTHER-CANUCKERS IN COUNTERPARTS. ON THE EVE OF RELEASING THEIR FOURTH – AND POTENTIALLY BEST – ALBUM, BLUNT SPOKE WITH VOCALIST BRENDAN MURPHY TO FIND OUT WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT.

WORDS BY DAVID JAMES YOUNG.

"It's Canada Day!" The celebratory announcement comes ringing down the line as Brendan Murphy, vocalist for melodic hardcore quintet Counterparts, celebrates his country at home in his native Hamilton. It's brought up how funny it is that, given the size of it, people constantly seem to think that everyone in the Canadian music scene knows one another and are all good mates. "I know, right?" Murphy laughs. "It's like, 'Oh, you guys would know PUP, right? You're friends with them'. Like, they play in the area a lot but I don't know any of them personally." There's always time, though, right? "Definitely. I'm sure we'll all meet up at a Drake concert sometime and it'll be beautiful." Murphy is in incredibly high spirits – and, given the way things are going for Counterparts at the moment, it seems fitting. A couple of somewhat difficult years followed between the release of the band's last album, 2013's *The Difference Between Hell And Home*, and *Tragedy Will Find Us*, their forth overall. The band lost guitarist Alex Re and bassist Eric Baginet, both of whom were founding members of the band alongside Murphy and guitarist Jesse Doreen.

"When Alex and Eric left, it hit me and Jesse pretty hard," says Murphy. "We went from having four original members to just the two of us. At the time, the other two just felt like things were getting stale – it makes you think if you're the crazy one. Like, do we still want to do this? There was a moment where we weren't sure if we were going to keep doing this. Then leaving coincided with things going really well for the band, which is crazy. That kind of made us want to push forward." Murphy and Doreen – alongside drummer Kelly Bilan, who has been in the fold since 2012 – then took it upon themselves to rebuild Counterparts. It developed far quicker than either of them could have anticipated.

"Adrian [Lee] jumped on immediately to replace Alex – we actually used to get him to sell merch for us back in the day," Murphy continues. "Our friend Brian [Zaczmarczyk] came on board as Eric's replacement, and he's been doing a fantastic job. The roles were filled kind of seamlessly, and then things started to change. All these good things

started happening. We got new management, we got a new label, we started making a bit more money when we went out on tour... we're so glad that we stuck it out." *Tragedy Will Find Us* is another bold step forward for a band that revels in post-hardcore that's smart, sharp and blisteringly intense. It's a record to be embraced completely – screamed out until your voice gives out, played as loud as your device of choice will allow. It's also an album that cut to the bone in a unique way – as Murphy attests, it was his own personal struggle that allowed him to write directly from the heart.

"I can remember when we were just about to head off for our Australian tour last time we came through, and we were trying to finish these new songs," he says. "I didn't have a lot of lyrics done at the time we started recording – I had enough for maybe three songs. Then, all this shit started happening in my life... the band itself was still doing well, but there was this slump of a few months where I had this unbelievable run of bad luck. I couldn't stop myself from writing – it was my way out; it was my chance to get myself out of the corner I'd been backed into. I think that's why this record is a little darker and a lot more honest."

The conversation shifts towards the idea of great songwriters being the ones that are most honest with themselves. It's particularly pertinent when it comes to the contextual standpoint of Counterparts' music – theirs is a scene and greater community that, to borrow a phrase from Wayne's World's Benjamin Kane, can spot phonies pretty easily. Murphy elaborates on how his lyric writing has progressed over the band's four studio albums



– the rage is indeed maintained, but it's now more about channeling that anger through layers as opposed to simply stating it outright.

"Our first two records, if you go back and listen to them... they're really blunt and they don't pull any punches," says Murphy. "They're fine for what they are and where they came from, but it got to this point where I had to say to myself, 'I'm not 18 anymore. I can't write like that'. I knew I didn't

# Kingdom!



want to get too metaphorical – I mean, we're not a fucking djent band singing about the galaxy or some shit. It was more about trying to find a way of putting how I'm feeling into a broader spectrum. If you're very specific about what you're writing about, that might make people reluctant to make a connection – they might think that, because it's not specifically about what they're going through, it might not mean anything to them. If you speak of these sorts

of things on a grander scale, though, you have a better chance of getting through to someone. They'll think, 'They're angry, they're miserable... I'm angry. I'm miserable. This means something to me.'

The topic of the band returning to Australian shores is touched upon to wrap up, and Murphy quickly confirms it's happening. "I don't wanna say too much now, but we're looking at coming over in early 2016," he hints. "We love touring

there – especially when it's our winter. We leave the city in the midst of a blizzard, and we arrive in Australia, where we can pretty much just go to the beach every single day. We definitely want to take advantage of that as often as we can." **B**



**TRAGEDY WILL FIND US**  
IS OUT NOW ON PURE NOISE/SONY.







# DEFEATER

# IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

**WATCHING YOUR FAVOURITE BAND SAY GOODBYE NIGHT AFTER NIGHT HAS REALLY PUT THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE FOR DEREK ARCHAMBAULT, BUT WITH A NEW HIP, NEW LABEL AND NEW ALBUM IN THEIR GRASP, THERE'S NO END IN SIGHT FOR HIS BAND DEFEATER.**

WORDS BY AMY SIMMONS. PHOTO BY SANDRA MARKOVIC

**A**t some point, all bands must come to an end. Most of the time it comes as a huge shock, and before those invested have any real time to process what is happening, the members have moved on with their lives. As Defeater are learning, it isn't any easier knowing the end is near for your favourite band. When we find Defeater, they are midway through their Australian tour with the seminal band Bane, who are using their support slot as an opportunity to say goodbye after a 21-year slog through the hardcore trenches. Bane have always been a huge influence for Defeater. As fellow Massachusetts natives, the guys in Defeater grew up going to Bane shows, and watching them take their final bow in each city has made Defeater really think about life on the road in 2015.

"We say this all the time how much the band means to us and how much of a privilege it is to us to be on their final Australian tour but it's just weird. I don't want to think of Bane not being a band," sighs frontman Derek Archambault. "Being with Bane on their final Australian tour does kind of put things into a different perspective where an end point... it's not in our foreseeable future, but it kind of makes it more relevant and you see eventually that's just how bands peter out."

"I'm super grateful we are even at this point that we are touring all the time, especially now with me personally being back and healthy. It's weird to see an end point for a band that I never thought would." Last year we almost said goodbye to Defeater too. After a work accident left Archambault with a badly injured leg and hip and little mobility, he couldn't walk without a cane let alone command a stage night after night. The pain was constant and doctors were concerned that he would break his fragile hip on stage; an unplanned, indefinite hiatus in the early stages of the *Letters Home* touring cycle was forced upon the band until Archambault could undergo hip replacement surgery. When his insurance refused to cover it, Defeater fans opened their wallets and after extensive physiotherapy, Defeater are back in the van clutching a brand new album.

Album four in the Defeater stable, *Abandoned* continues to follow the narrative of the tortured New Jersey family in a post-World War II setting. For those new to the concept, their debut, *Travels* (2008), starts the story with the younger brother who killed his father to save his mother but learns he can't outrun the consequences. *Empty Days & Sleepless Nights* (2011) follows the older brother who struggles to deal with his father's death, while supporting his mother who is a heroin addict.

The pressure becomes too much and he turns to alcohol for an escape. *Letters Home* (2013) takes the perspective of the father, taking us inside his shattered state of mind while serving in World War II and the trauma that triggered his descent into alcoholism and domestic abuse. *Abandoned* revisits the priest we met in *Travels*.

"The record is from the perspective of a character that seemed like it was a small piece. Not even a piece to the puzzle, just like a chance meeting with someone. It shows just how what comes across as a minor character in the story is actually at the forefront of the entire family and how one family can have so many interlocking members and parts and people that in a real messed up way, everybody fucks each other over without ever meeting. Kind of a *Gatsby*-ian way of how these people's stories intertwine and everybody's actions ultimately influence someone else they've never met."

Initially meant to be an EP to get the ball rolling with their new label, Epitaph, while Archambault recovered from surgery, Defeater decided to give the priest his own album, and if you were curious, there's just as much fact in the dark and tormented fiction.

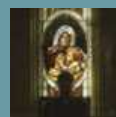
"A lot of things I pull from are from experience, not necessarily as deep and dark as I write about, but everything comes from a story that a family member told, or a dear friend, or it comes from a friend I've lost. It's not hard for me to get into the mindset of these characters. I live with them in my head all the time. To me, they are real. It's just an extension of me, it's an extension of my friends and it's an extension of my bandmates."

While fans will devour the lyrical content of *Abandoned* and have heated debates about what it all means, the boys in Defeater are hyper aware the internet can turn against you at any time. In the past, Defeater's political views and belief system have come under scrutiny and they've had shows protested all because of an angry mob on online. Recently, Front Porch Step, No Good News and Ronnie Radke have all been accused of sexual assault via posts on Tumblr and social media, which have spurred boycott movements of record labels, management companies, booking agents and everyone else associated with these bands. Archambault's side project, Alcoa, was scheduled to tour with Front Porch Step when the allegations against Jake McElfresh came to light, which saw him cop abuse for something he wasn't complicit in. "I was supposed to be on a tour with Front Porch Step and the amount of shit that I got based on

that when all those allegations came out, I was three out of five on that tour. I met that kid once, I got people telling me how much they hate me on the internet because I'm touring with him. Go fuck yourself. I don't know you, I don't know anything about this. I don't condone it by any means and if he's guilty, he is guilty. Just don't do it in the first place.

"On either side – don't cast the first stone from your computer anonymously," Archambault continues passionately. "We live in an age of witch-hunts and sensationalising everything and it blows my mind. If they are guilty, they are guilty and that's something for the legal system. It's well and fine to have your opinion on these things and no, I do not condone rape and I don't condone any sort of sexual assault. I don't condone you slapping a woman's arse. I don't condone asshole, dickish, misogynistic behaviour at all, but do not try to ruin someone's life anonymously on the internet and don't take their friends and their management and their label down with them because you don't like one person's actions. It doesn't reflect the label; it doesn't reflect the other people who are involved and the business side of it. The sensationalism is what kills me, people just latching onto an idea."

The very ethos of hardcore is to think for yourself and always ask why. As Archambault watches one of the most influential bands in hardcore take their final backward glance in Australia, he reflects on what lessons he has taken away from the scene. "It's taught me to see things as a constant question and the political leanings of most hardcore bands definitely influenced my thinking a lot and taught me to try to think for myself. Without punk rock and hardcore, I probably wouldn't have known about veganism and straight edge in '97/'98 and that changed my life forever. As much as I broke edge for a long time it taught me restraint and I lost that for a little while but I definitely fucking have it again now and I think that specifically helped me get through a lot in the last three years. It's cheesy, but punk rock and hardcore have, on multiple occasions, saved my life, especially with my hip replacement. I wouldn't have been able to afford it without the hardcore community giving back. It's not even giving back, I fucking recorded some songs and put out a shitty self-released EP and people bought it. It's a giant family." **B**



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METAL

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# MAYDAY PARADE

MARGARET COURT ARENA, MELBOURNE 11/07/15

\* PHOTO BY DANIEL ANDERSON



**BLUNT**



# DEFEATER

THE BALD FACED STAG, SYDNEY 04/06/15 \* PHOTO BY SANDRA MARKOVIC





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# RISE AGAINST



# MAINTAINING THE RAGE



OVER 15 YEARS INTO AN ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER AS ONE OF AMERICA'S MOST CELEBRATED MODERN PUNK BANDS, WHAT KEEPS RISE AGAINST GOING? IS THE REVOLUTION EVER COMING? **BLUNT** SPOKE WITH THE BAND'S FEARLESS FRONTMAN, TIM MCILRATH, TO DISCUSS THE PAST AND PRESENT OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE AND HOW THE GEEKS HAVE INHERITED THE EARTH.

WORDS BY DAVID JAMES YOUNG.

In First World countries, being a "punk", in whatever degree of semantics one chooses to place on such a term, might get you a few dirty glances from a boomer or two. Elsewhere, such a thing can get you in jail or killed. As such, it's a movement one shouldn't take for granted. Such a thing is not lost on Rise Against – although theirs is the kind of punk that hurtled into mainstream consciousness and was thus perceived to be 'safe' from such scrutiny, the band still found themselves on edge while touring in Europe recently.

"The last time we went to Russia to play was about three or four years ago," says Tim McIlrath, who serves as the band's lead vocalist, rhythm guitarist, primary lyricist and one of two founding members, alongside bassist Joe Principe, who have remained for the band's entirety. "The changes that place has seen in the time since we were last there is just surreal. When we were there, Pussy Riot was just local news – it hadn't broken around the world yet. There was this world of sanctions, the war they had going on with the Ukraine, really harsh laws against homosexuality... all of this was happening. You make a choice when you're in a band – you can choose to either boycott a place like this or show up and put water where the fire is. That's what we decided to do."

To further extend that particular metaphor, Rise Against have been dousing any and all comers since the release of their seventh studio album, *The Black Market*, in 2014. McIlrath notes that the crowd reaction to songs from the album has been generally positive. At the same time, he is also clear that now – with literally over 100 songs to choose from – is more difficult a time than ever to narrow down what gets played on tour.

"It's so hard to do a setlist these days," he laments. "You want to do the crowd-pleasers, but you also want to play the songs that you love as well. Thankfully for us, that's a pretty close Venn diagram – the songs we tend to like playing most seem to be the ones that people love hearing the most. The crowd is a huge part of the show to me – I'm not a performer who's just there to entertain me. If they're not having a good time, I'm not either. I care about the bigger picture."

A decade prior, Rise Against were in the midst of their third album, *Siren Song For The Counter Culture*, as well as Fat Mike's Rock Against Bush movement, which saw many notable artists in the world of punk rock standing up against the regime of then-president George W. Bush. A new Bush is in the presidential picture now – W's brother, Jeb – and American politics feels just as much the monkey house now as it was then. The question then, is put to McIlrath – not literally, but in the sense of a music-oriented united-front revolt: Could there ever be another Rock Against Bush?

"It's certainly a great question for this moment in American history," begins McIlrath. "I can't remember the last time we had a week like this one just past – a lot of the things that we fight for and we represent as a band were achieved. There was the Affordable Care act – health care in America that's designed for people, not profit. It

**"OUR WHOLE CAREER HAS BEEN A 'FUCK YOU' MOMENT! WE WERE THE BLACK SHEEP THAT WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE HERE." TIM MCILRATH**



# RISE AGAINST



was passed a year ago, but it was challenged, and the final challenge was taken down last week which means we're on the way to a proper system. You also had marriage equality being recognised nation-wide; and the Confederate Flag has been taken down from public places. When you view the world from this side of the fence, it's very rare that you have something to celebrate. Those types of achievements are proof that there's something to be said for the fight Rock Against Bush started. To some young people, music is more important to them than their parents, teachers, politicians, friends... it's such a huge influence. When it's used for something more than selling records, it sparks a flame."

Touring for *The Black Market* brought the band back to Australia for the first time in years this February past, in which the band were the main support for stadium rock staples the Foo Fighters. During the set of the Sydney date, former My Chemical Romance frontman Gerard Way joined the band on stage to lead a cover of the Misfits song "Astro Zombies". For people like Way and McIlrath – who were almost certainly teased in high school for liking bands like the Misfits by boys who invariably grew up to be Foo Fighters fans – it's safe to assume that

performing that cover was an ultimate 'fuck you' moment.

"Our whole career has been a 'fuck you' moment!" laughs McIlrath. "It's like someone let the kids out in the candy store! We were the black sheep that were never meant to be here. We never even went to arenas to see bands – we went to dive bars, bowling alleys, basements, veteran halls... to be playing the kind of places that we get to play right now is just crazy to us. We live for those moments. Bringing Gerard out... I mean, our bands played on the Warped Tour together back in like 2003 to maybe a couple hundred kids for maybe a couple hundred bucks. Neither of us imagined that our band would do what they've done. We feel like we've snuck behind enemy lines." The cover-oriented fun on the Foo Fighters tour didn't stop there, either. "The other nights of that tour, we always did something different with that slot," McIlrath continues. "One of the other nights, we covered 'Kiss The Bottle' by Jawbreaker. Chris [Shiflett] from the Foo Fighters came out and sang that with us, which was really cool. In Adelaide, we covered a Screaming Trees song and we convinced Dave [Grohl] to come out and play drums for it! Playing all of these songs – especially to an audience that probably wouldn't have heard them before – was really gratifying."

There's still plenty more touring to come for Rise Against in 2015 – and, as was recently announced, touring in support of *The Black Market* is coming to a grand finale right back here in Australia with a run of east coast shows. Joining the band on the tour will be two of Melbourne's best bands – genre regardless – in the form of Clowns and Outright. According to McIlrath, both left an immediate and subsequently indelible impression on him. "Sometimes, you can tell within the first 45 seconds of a song whether you're going to like a band or not," he says. "It's an immediate gut reaction. I got that from Clowns and Outright – they came recommended really highly from a lot of people, and I knew that our fans would be into it. We always have the best time when we're out there with you guys – it was amazing to start the year off there and it'll be even better to see it out there." **B**



**RISE AGAINST  
ON TOUR  
DECEMBER 2015**

666

# DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL

IN THIS ISSUE OF **BLUNT** WE'VE GOT MORE METAL THAN YOUR MAMMA'S KETTLE. FROM THE HEAVIEST OF THE HEAVY ABOUT TO DESTROY AUSTRALIA WITH THEIR EXTREME WAYS TO THE RIFF LORDS DROPPING NEW BANGERS, WE'VE GOT YOUR HEADBANGING NEEDS SORTED. PREPARE THY HORNS \m/



## BEHEMOTH

**W**e are an underground band, no matter what some people may say or suggest," Behemoth main-man Nergal emphasises. "We're underground, we are extreme, and we know where we came from. A compulsion to remain an artist, not merely a craftsman, culminated in the long-standing blackened death metal act's latest five-years-in-the-making *The Satanist*; a ferocious effort that commands regular rotation at **BLUNT** HQ. The ensuing touring, including a typically incendiary performance this publication witnessed at Germany's Wacken Open Air, reinforced the Poles' visceral delivery as a live act. This is a sentiment Australian fans will rediscover upon their return, alongside unholy Swedish black metal juggernauts Watain and Swiss brutalisers Bölzer. Typically for the Christian-baiting outfit, possessing an unknack for courting controversy and who have encountered numerous setbacks – beating cancer, legal strife – the 18 months since release haven't been completely devoid of drama. "There hasn't been a single fuck-up during this cycle. Well, I was one in Russia where we got arrested [allegedly for not having the required work visas]... But the whole thing was pretty political. It wasn't really in our control. Other than that, everything – touring, the media we put out, there was no single, even like average review of the record. *The Satanist* has been a success on every possible level, and I can't imagine just topping it." Not that he's scrambling to try. "After a record like *The Satanist*, I just don't feel like getting into the studio... The way we wanted it to be, the way bands toured in the '90s, like Metallica or U2... They put out records, and they toured for a few years and would make several videos. The longevity, the life of the record, the cycle was more than a year or two. Within the extreme metal genre, people are just used to bands that are fucking touring their arses off – they're putting out records every season and either fade out or burn out or whatever. We didn't want that. The way we approached *The Satanist* was the last record for Behemoth. That was how I approached the record: that it was going to be fucking top-notch, that it was going to be 100 percent. "I listen to the record now and there's no way I can do better, and I'm being entirely honest. So if one day, we think we have something to offer that will deliver something more than special to the world... We just need to offer something spectacular. If we don't have this

**"WE ARE UNDERGROUND, WE ARE EXTREME, AND WE KNOW WHERE WE CAME FROM."**

**ADAM "NERGAL" DARSKI**

feeling that we had with *The Satanist*, then we won't even be entering the studio and making a new album. There's no way. The way too many mediocre and generic albums and bands out there market, so I'd rather not be one of them, or become one of them. What may assist in facilitating further Behemoth material eventually completing his non-metal solo output, which the vocalist/guitarist maintains is primitive and stripped-down. "The thing with Behemoth is we always do everything over-the-top. Everything is just fucking huge, with big productions, big budgets. I know that in order to make the next Behemoth album, I'm doing something that's gonna be exactly opposite to [that]." Nergal isn't fazed about whether fans will approve, instead utilising it as a key creative outlet. "When I do this I truly believe I'm going to get the right balance of my artistic level, my artistic needs. And once that has been done, I think I'll be at a point of view where I can eventually start approaching Behemoth with the right perspective." **E**

# WHERE STRIDES THE BEHEMOTH

**POLISH DEATH METALLERS BEHEMOTH HAVE NO DESIRE TO DROWN IN A SEA OF MEDIOCRITY, FRONTMAN ADAM "NERGAL" DARSKI TELLS BLUNT.**

WORDS BY BRENDAN CRABB.  
PHOTO BY KANE HIBBERD.

**BLUNT.MAG.COM.AU FOR THE TOUR DATES.**



NILE

# MASTERING THE DARK ARTS

AHEAD OF DROPPING HIS EIGHTH RECORD AND A WORLD TOUR THAT INCLUDES AUSTRALIA, NILE'S VOCALIST AND GUITARIST KARL SANDERS CHECKED IN WITH **BLUNT** TO GIVE US THE LOWDOWN ON HOW TO MAKE DEATH METAL COMPELLING AND CATCHY.

WORDS BY MICHAEL ADDISON.



**S**traight-shooting Karl Sanders, mastermind behind the death metal veterans Nile and music's premier Egyptologist, is absolutely clear about the intent behind their forthcoming release, *What Should Not Be Unearthed*.

"We wanted to make a record specifically for the fans. Heavy, memorable, catchy and just fucking brutal! These days I hear so many records by death metal bands where all the focus is on technicality. The songs get lost."

The hookiness is not an idea normally associated with technical death metal, Nile's music speaks for itself. "Evil To Cast Out Evil" and "To Walk Forth From Flames Unscathed" boast signature riffs where both savagery and infectiousness have been honed to a razor sharpness. Sanders is dismissive of any metal, including his own, that prioritises musicianship and production values over impact and atmosphere.

"I felt like our last album, *At The Gate Of Sethu*, was too clean, too surgical, too precise," he says. Lamenting metal's lurch towards trebly, compressed mixes and grid-edited performances, Sanders imagines a digital plug-in called 'The Humanizer' that injects human personality into otherwise sterile tracks. "But, of course, it hasn't been invented yet because it's not fucking possible. Human beings are not computers; human beings are flawed."

Flawed though they may be, Sanders is proud of the humans that have travelled the hard road of the metal touring circuit alongside him for the

past 17 years. Despite a revolving door of bassists, Nile's core trio has remained steady for over a decade.

"There's something really special between myself, Dallas [Toller-Wade, guitar and vocals] and George [Kollias, drums]," says Sanders. "If you talk to any musician who's been playing for a while, they'll

**"I USED TO BE AN ANGRY GUY, BUT I'M NOT NOW BECAUSE I MAKE DARK AND HORRIBLE MUSIC FOR A LIVING."**  
**KARL SANDERS**

tell you the hardest part of a band is keeping the people together and keeping everyone happy. For many years we neglected that aspect because we were so focused on the hard work ethic." Sanders' passion for Egyptology has always played a huge role in Nile's music. As a historical setting it's blood-soaked, mythological and

grandiose – perfect fodder for extreme metal's brutal theatrics. *What Should Not Be Unearthed* puts a new spin on this theme, its lyrics describing an archaeological discovery so shocking and horrifying that it rocks our understanding of human origins and history to the core. He cites the works of the classic horror author H.P. Lovecraft, a man obsessed by the darker currents of the inner and outer world, as a key influence on the music. But for Sanders, this obsession with the black side of life and music is more than an imaginative exercise.

"Nile's music is a grand, cathartic release," says Sanders. "I used to be an angry guy, but I'm not now because I make dark and horrible music for a living. A release like metal brings a wonderful balance to life, not just for people who play it but for who listen to it as well." Drawing the links between his love of history and the enduring, bleak power of extreme metal, Sanders is philosophical: "Human beings are essentially violent creatures. It recently we've become civilised and domesticated. All those darker instincts are still right there under the surface, easily tapped into and exploited. If you don't have an inherent respect for that it can cause a lot of trouble and lead to a lot of problems in this world." **E**



**WHAT SHOULD NOT BE UNEARTHED**  
AUGUST 28 THROUGH  
NUCLEAR BLAST.





× DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL ×

BE



GHOST

# BETTER DAYS

THEIR IDENTITIES STILL RELATIVELY INTACT, SWEDISH OCCULT ROCKERS GHOST HAVE PENNED ANOTHER SACRED PSALM.

WORDS BY BRENDAN CRABB.

The prior occasion this scribe interviewed a Nameless Ghoul, one of the unidentified musicians comprising the bulk of hard rockers Ghost, a comedy of errors ensued. With the Swedes' hotel-based in Auckland during the Big Day Out circus last year, this writer was the day's first phone interview for one of the mysterious Ghouls. However, it took a half-hour for the conferencing centre to locate the appropriate band personnel, due to a lack of name or alias to ask for at the front desk. You couldn't make this stuff up, but these scenarios must be an occupational hazard for this industry anomaly. There are no such obstacles when **BLUNT** connects with the band amid their press schedule promoting third album *Meliora*. We're conversing with a lead guitar-playing Ghoul, the same member affected by the aforementioned confusion. "At the end of the day, or at the end of the century, when the book will come out about the actual story of this band, there will be so many stories like that," he laughs. "What looked good on paper six, seven years ago, it seemed like a cool idea to be this anonymous masked band. But it's so extremely impractical, and you have a lot of Spinal Tap moments like that. The world is not constructed for an image like ours; it doesn't work. [That day] was just a clusterfuck... It's stupid, but it's a

In this iPhone-riddled, social media savvy age, which eradicates what little mystique still surrounds artists, it's an impressive feat that the Nameless Ghouls have remained anonymous. Vocalist/Satanic priest Papa Emeritus is widely rumoured online to be Tobias Forge (unconfirmed by the band), but his cohorts have emerged seemingly unscathed. "Our first record [*Opus Eponymous*] came out in October 2010, and I think we figured that it's all going to be shot down to shit by November 1, 2010. What were days in the beginning were weekly or monthly thing, where we're like, 'It's still there? It still works?' I think also the one thing that sets our band apart a little from a lot of others,

especially the sort of bands that broke through the past five years, is that we are slightly older than most of them. And we are not very interactive... I don't have Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. I still use fucking Hotmail," he laughs.

Fans have not only championed their cause, but actively helped safeguard it. "Even though there have been attempts at exposing who we are, we've never really raised our hands saying, 'Okay, it's me, bring on the chicks'. As long as we don't do that I don't think it's a big problem. But the good thing about our real fans is that they are very protective, supportive, and respectful... After a show, if there's 50 or 100 people outside, waiting by our bus and everybody recognises you, it's like, 'Okay, it's not that secret I guess,'" the Ghoul chuckles. "But most people are very cool about it."

The tome dissecting their exploits will be fascinating, and the new record should elicit another page-turning, metallic chapter emanating their meshing of theatrics, blasphemous lyrical bent and underlying pop sensibilities. What lessons were gleaned from the previous two LPs which were applied to *Better Days*?

"I wouldn't say so much from the first album, because that was very much a sort of embryonic... It's almost like that night you lost your virginity, and it just ended up being really good," he laughs. "Miraculously, we did something right. But going into the next record, we were deliberately trying not to replicate the first, because we wanted the second one to not feel like we'd embraced the hype too much. In our minds it would have been so cheap going in, making *Opus 2*, which possibly could have earned us more of a cult reputation rather than a commercial one, which is valuable too, but that wasn't really what we wanted. We have always also tried to use traditional means, in terms of making music, how we listen to music and the records we like, but we've always wanted them to be contemporary, for lack of a better word. We don't want to be part of an old scene, we want to be part of something new. So we're being

inspired by yesterday and taking it into tomorrow. "I think on (2013's) *Prequelle*, we were leaning

a little too much towards yesterday, and it became a little too retrospective. We were in a hurry, the album had to be remixed and mastered literally in the last hour before going into pressing the record. So there were a few very dumb decisions made last minute which made the record sound a little bit too retro in a way. I'm not talking about the songs, it's just sonically.

"So with that in mind, we were determined going into this recording knowing what our formula of sound could... what could be wrong with it sometimes when you mix and master it. Because it's still sort of traditional. It's analogue, it's old gear, it's an old school way of playing. I dare to say that if we would remix and remaster *Opus Eponymous*, it would sound as powerful, probably. I'm not going to be talking down *Opus Eponymous*; I love that record, and I think most of that material sounded fantastic live. And that is our job, to play music live. That's what we do most of the time, so fortunately it lives on, on-stage."

*Better Days* features a "new" singer, the third incarnation of Papa Emeritus's ever-evolving **BLUNT** jokes their latest

frontman is eerily reminiscent of his predecessors, our ghoul-friend blurs the lines between fact and fiction, admitting it's part of their so-called schtick. "That's a tradition we enjoy. There's nothing more painful than a really asshole singer, so we're lucky that we can at least rely on the time being limited, so you can kind of swallow a little shit in the process," he laughs. "But fortunately we don't have to socialise too much with them. They sort of appear, when we're going on-stage and then they disappear. So we live our lives and they live a different one." **E**



**MELIORA**  
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× DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL ×

**Disturbed**

# MY IMMORTAL

DESPITE THEIR MOMENTARY ABSENCE, DISTURBED FRONTMAN DAVID DRAIMAN TELLS **BLUNT** ABOUT BELIEVING IN THE MEGA-SELLING HARD ROCKERS' INDESTRUCTIBLE FOLLOWING.

WORDS BY BRENDAN CRABB.





# TAL



**A** lot of white lies, a lot of veiled threats, non-disclosure agreements and pissed off relatives and friends," Disturbed's David Draiman laughs of the tight-lipped writing and recording surrounding *Immortalized*, arriving after a four-year hiatus. Throughout **BLUNT**'s conversation with the vocalist (who recently withdrew from Twitter after becoming weary of being baited about his sometimes contentious views) from his home in Austin, Texas, Draiman's young son can be audibly detected in the background. Considering the band's frantic itinerary since 2000's multi-platinum debut spending a concentrated period with family is a joy he'd perhaps have been required to forego, had Disturbed not consciously opted to undertake what Draiman insists was a much-needed breather to recharge creative batteries.

**What does your son think of Disturbed?**

I don't know yet. We've played him some of the music sometimes, and he likes it. He already does something kind of like 'ooh-wa-aa-ahh', but it's more like The Count from [ ].

**You formed the Device project during Disturbed's break, but was there a part of you that perhaps didn't wish to return to that type of grind?**

Well, I think that we're not going to be doing the Disturbed thing as much anymore. That's kind of part of the plan post-hiatus, to make it an event when it does occur.

We're not coming back to go back to the make a record/tour type of thing [

celebration for both band and fan each time it does occur.

[We'll be touring] more selectively, and trying to make 'em count. But definitely opening

our eyes to some parts of the globe that we haven't been to before, and definitely want to make sure we hit everywhere on the planet that we have been to before. There's a lot of people we're trying to accommodate in the amount of time that we're trying to allot for it, so it's challenging.

**Is that lessened schedule steeped in wanting to afford more time for family life?**

Thankfully the situation that we're in, we're blessed that I have had the ability and liberty to be able to watch my son grow up into almost the first two years of his life already. That's something that not a lot of people get to do. I'm very fortunate to be in that position, and it's only because of the blessings that I have been able to have from Disturbed.

**So the writing process for *Immortalized* was reminiscent of early albums, featuring the respective members sitting in a room together?**

It's something that we haven't done since the record [in 2002]. It was a great rediscovery, if you will, of the chemistry that we have when we are just improvising and trying to create in a room together with each other. It's pretty amazing; I feel very blessed to have that. There's so many people, so many artists for whom either occasionally, or sometimes unfortunately permanently, the well runs dry, so to speak. Danny [Donegan, guitar], Mike [Wengren, drums] and I have never had that

problem, thank God. Not yet [ ]. I'm hoping we

**During the 15-year period since your debut, numerous heavy music trends have fallen by the wayside, or bands have witnessed their drawing power wane significantly. Conversely, Disturbed have almost transcended genres and the profile seems on a constant upswing. What do you attribute that ongoing success to?**

It continues to amaze me, honestly. I wish I could put my finger on it, be able to say, "Hey, here's the formula, everybody can follow this" [ can't. I don't know why we're so fortunate to have a fanbase that grows on its own, without us doing anything to it. It's pretty damn amazing. Like our Facebook page for example: When we left on hiatus it was at about seven, seven-and-a-half million, and now it's at about ten-and-a-half million. Without us putting out any records, any touring, or anything, after all that time. I don't know what to attribute the growth to, other than people actually spreading it naturally and organically. Fans telling other fans of music that this is a band you should check out. That's real, that's not something contrived or something that the industry is shoving down people's throats. It's not something that's the flavour of the month. It's something that people have invested in to the extent that they are willing to expose their friends to it. We really do owe everything to the Disturbed fanbase;

they are our lifeblood. I'm very curious to see their reaction to the rest of this record. The way they've reacted to the single ["The Vengeful One"] has been amazing, and the record definitely goes in some different directions than the single indicates. I hope they're as proud of it as we are, and that

**"WE REALLY DO OWE EVERYTHING TO THE DISTURBED FANBASE; THEY ARE OUR LIFELOOD."**  
**DAVID DRAIMAN**

they feel that it justifies in some way the amount of time we had to take away from one another.

**You're on record as being amused by The Greatest Hit Of Disturbed online parody, which lampooned the band's "limited creativity" and "repetitive vocal phrasing".**

I thought it was very funny [ flattering when somebody goes to the effort of making a parody of you. They put some work

**Such jibes have hardly hindered your momentum.**

People are kind of defeating their own cause if they think they're going to knock a band down by doing something like that [ ]. You're only going to make all the true fans look at it and chuckle, and you're going to make everybody else who wasn't a fan to begin with, maybe even take interest and be curious, because it's raising enough curiosity among the people who are the haters. Those who have never really been exposed to it are like, "Whoa, maybe I should check this out". My favourite line was, "Never has a band done so much with so little" [ ]. Fucking priceless. God bless them. **B**



**IMMORTALIZED**  
**IS OUT AUGUST 21 THROUGH WARNER.**



## DEAD LETTER CIRCUS

# FOLLOW YOUR HEART

AFTER A LONG, OFTEN FRUSTRATING GRIND ON THE ROAD TRYING TO CRACK THE US METAL SCENE, DEAD LETTER CIRCUS KNEW IT WAS TIME TO CHANGE OR GET LEFT BEHIND. FRONTMAN KIM BENZIE SAT DOWN WITH **BLUNT**, TAKING US THROUGH THE SPONTANEOUS AND INTUITIVE CREATION OF THEIR THIRD RECORD *AESTHESIS*, ONE WHERE THEY REDISCOVERED THE JOY OF SONGWRITING.

WORDS BY MICHAEL ADDISON. PHOTO BY KANE HIBBERD

Dead Letter Circus is a homegrown Australian band that has seen its fair share of success and severe setbacks. After a decade of touring, performing in Australia and overseas, the band has seen its share of success and severe setbacks. "We came off the back of two years of intense touring, performing in America," says vocalist Kim Benzie, who is currently in a Sydney pub. "Predominantly alongside very heavy bands. While we were playing with our chin up it was also hard to play rock music to really die-hard metal fans. They weren't so into it." Weary after a long tour, the band was looking for some kind of equilibrium. "We arrived in Australia pretty burnt out," says Benzie, "and either take a break and do other things, or get into it again." As it happened, guitarist Luke Palmer had just become a new member after performing a couple of live shows. Palms, as he's affectionately known, brought a spark with him that revitalised

his bandmates. So they called up their label and booked studio time, so excited to write again that they might have fibbed a bit about how many songs had already been written. But in the end, a spontaneous and experimental writing approach in the studio was exactly the right prescription for post-tour blues. "Something really clicked with the group dynamic. It was a boundary-free and ego-free environment. No rules and plenty of experimentation," says Benzie. "We fell in love with writing music again." And while they might not have known exactly what they wanted to write, Dead Letter Circus were absolutely sure they didn't want to make another record like 2012's *The Catalyst Fire*. "That stuff was fresh when we did it," Benzie reflects. "But in the two years that followed, a lot of bands swung towards that same idea. The *Aesthesis* songs did start off with lots of complexity, but as things went along we found that we were pulling back and letting them breathe and unwind. Before the tracks went for the final mix

we had a 'delete party'. Does it need this? No? Delete. And we'd do it for our own parts, not just for each other's." And *Aesthesis* is a bigger, more confident record because of this fearlessness. A last-minute mix from the renowned American engineer Chris Lord-Alge (knob-tweaker for Muse, Deftones, Stone Temple Pilots and The Smashing Pumpkins) opened up the sonic space and brought forth a warm, spacious tone that contrasts with the digital productions of modern alt-rock. The density of past work has been dialled back, with massive hooks and concise songwriting now firmly at the fore-front. It's the sound of a veteran band trusting themselves to know what their own music needs, in the moment and without overthinking it. Awareness and intuition are at the center of *Aesthesis*. The album title comes from a Greek-derived word meaning 'an unelaborated elementary awareness of stimulation'. It's a way of experiencing the world without imposing any expectations upon it.





**"WE LIVE IN AN  
ANALYTICAL, HEAD-  
DECISION WORLD."  
KÍM BENZIE**

"For us the theme is about returning to a real heart-based consciousness by recognising what is actually around us. We live in an analytical, head-decision world," muses Benzie. "We're told our heart will get us in trouble. But your heart is where your intuition is."

This isn't just some grand philosophical posturing, either. Never ones to shy away from the social issues, songs like lead single "While You Wait" are upbeat and driving, but the lyrics paint a despairing at a society which is asleep on its feet, unwilling to see the patterns in their surroundings and behaviour. This strident approach doesn't always exist comfortably in a market-driven music world.

"I know a music producer in America, not Chris Lord-Alge who mixed the record, but just a friend who we share tracks with," recounts Benzie. "He called me on Skype, very concerned, saying, 'A song as catchy as 'While You Wait' doesn't come along very often in your life. But with these lyrics, you're going to shut down your commercial prospects in America. I think you should dumb it down'. He was trying to take us under his wing, and while I really respect this guy, that's not who we are."

Benzie is adamant that good music comes from sticking to your guns. "He's right about the music and the rarity of a great hook like that. But I want people to sing along to it first and have it stuck in their heads. Then, when they read the lyrics, they might go, 'Holy shit, I've been singing about my own apathetic, lazy, Western arse!' We know deep in our hearts that we need to change things, but we're very good at talking ourselves out of it." In this way, the concept and the production of the album come full circle. *Aesthesis* is about our neglected intuition, told to us by a band that rediscovered theirs in the spontaneity and joy of writing songs. This idea of being a conduit is really appealing to Benzie, especially as he gears up for what will probably be another long slog of tours in support of the new record.

"I've always wondered where music comes from, and keep coming back to this idea that we're just a channel for it. A conduit. This amazing music we get to write has to, in some way, come from somewhere else. Because we're too normal to come up with it ourselves. The deeper I get into it I feel like you need to be quiet; listen to the music to let it come through you." **E**



**AESTHESIS**  
IS OUT AUGUST 14, THROUGH  
UNFD.





× DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL ×

BULLET FOR  
MY VALENTINE

# A BLAST FROM THE PAST

COULD **VENOM** BE THE ALBUM LONG-TIME BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE FANS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR? **BLUNT** GETS THE SCOOP ON THE WELSHMEN'S HARDER, FASTER NEW RECORD.

WORDS BY DANIEL FURNARI.





**"TO THINK WE MIGHT HAVE HELPED  
SPAWN A NEW STYLE OR GENERATION  
OF METALHEAD IS AMAZING."**

**MATT TUCK**

**M**att Tuck is sounding content and energised when we interrupt his packing for Bullet For My Valentine's trip to South America. It's been a tumultuous but ultimately rewarding start to the year. 2015 signifies a new chapter for the Welsh metallers, with some significant changes in their ranks, as the release of *Venom* follows shortly after the news of a disruption in the band's long-standing core line-up – the departure of bassist and backing vocalist Jason James.

"Out of respect for his personal interests and ours, all we can say is it was the right time to go," says Tuck. "There is no bad blood, but things were getting a bit weird behind the scenes and it was having a negative impact on everything. It was a decision that we came to after months of talking about it and as we started moving forward into the new album cycle we knew we didn't want to start recording a new album with these questions lingering in the background."

James has since been replaced by new guy Jamie Mathias, a friend who had not long before enlisted

Bullet guitarist Patrick "Padge" Paget to record some demos for his then-band, Revoker. Having been asked by Paget to send in an audition video, Mathias was put through a jam audition along with other hopefuls where he had the chance to prove his mettle.

"He did everything he needed to do, to a level we've never seen before. And he's Welsh, which is a bonus – we didn't think that would happen!" Tuck laughs. Keeping things a bit more local became a running theme this time around, with the band choosing old friend Colin Richardson to jump behind the producer's desk – the man behind their groundbreaking first and second albums.

"We had the choice of anyone in the world to work with this time – we went to LA and had meetings with all these A-list producers, and then we came back and said, 'Let's just do it in the UK with Colin,'" explains Tuck. "We knew everyone would have their version of what we should do, and we just wanted to be ourselves. After working with Don Gilmore on the last few records, he's a great producer and we

learned a lot from him, but he had a vision of what we should be, and that was slightly different to ours. We knew Colin would allow us to do that, and capture us and make it sound heavy as fuck."

It's perhaps unsurprising to see Richardson engineering on a record that signifies Bullet For My Valentine's return to heavier, thrashier musical roots after two albums of experimenting with a simpler, more hard rock-oriented sound. Richardson's production was a big part of what made the band's *The Poison* and *Scream*. Aim, Fire LPs so powerful for their time, and the return to that familiar environment turned out to be just the boost the band needed.

"It was very comfortable and there was such a positive energy. There's no agenda; Colin just loves our band and wants to bring that out. No need for an adjustment period, no crappy bonding sessions and getting to know the person... It was like we never left!"

When it comes to their fans, the musical arc the band have followed over the years has been met



## × DEATH TO ALL BUT METAL ×

with mixed reactions. Having been a leading act of the early 2000s metal surge that also helped to lay some of the foundations for the modern metalcore sound, the mid-tempo stadium rock of later releases came as a surprise to some listeners, something Tuck puts down in part to a lack of perspective.

"As a fan, you only get finished products – chunks of music every couple of years," he explains. "During that quiet period, that's when we're writing and demoing and that's where all those changes are happening in a natural progression. We've dipped our toes in a lot of areas of the rock and metal world but it's not something we set out intentionally to do. I think actually the only time we've had a real game plan in our career was this time around on this record, when we made a conscious decision to make something aggressive and heavy."

The reasons for this decision stemmed from a new level of self-awareness – the kind that you'd expect after a good 10 years of releasing music together. Though the band have never been inclined to bend their music to meet the demands of their fanbase, there's something to be said for giving the people a little of what they want.

"We knew if there were criticisms to be made of

the last record – not only from fans and critics but also from within the band – people wanted heavy, and that was something that had been diluted along the way for whatever reason. I think we felt the time was right for us to get angry and make a record that would blow people's heads off. It took some work and time to get our heads in that place and find that zone, but once we knew we'd captured what we wanted it to sound like we were able to roll with it."

For Tuck, the inspiration to get heavier again involved a lot of retrospective reflection on why Bullet For My Valentine was heavy in the first place – digging deep to access that same aggression that grabbed so many young listeners by the horns and dragged them out of their comfort zone until many of them became fledgling metalheads. At age 35 with a wife and son, he's put most of his youthful angst behind him, a fact that has become something of a double-edged sword.

"Honestly, it's hard in a weird way that these days, with life being like it is for the boys and I, there's a lot less to be pissed off or miserable about. And while that's a great thing, unfortunately it's just not a great fuel for a metal lyricist!" he laughs. "I had to revisit a lot of horrible places and dark times

from my past – the young Matt who was a lot more frustrated and angry at the world."

Though Tuck insists that the name *Venom* is not in fact a cheeky throwback to *The Poison* ("It actually came about because we were referring to it as BFMV5, and the 5 became a Roman numeral V and it all just kind of gelled together!"), there's no doubt that the band have had nostalgia on the brain of late, and Tuck is beginning to appreciate the gravity of what Bullet For My Valentine have achieved both for themselves and for their genre.

"It's funny, it's not something we've thought about until very recently – being in this band is just a constant whirlwind and there's barely time to reflect on our own stuff, let alone what it's done for other musicians stylistically. But we've been at it for a decade now and we're on our fifth record so there is a bit more time to look at what we've achieved for ourselves, and to think we might have helped spawn a new style or generation of metalhead is amazing, and it's a privilege." **E**



### VENOM

IS OUT AUGUST 14 THROUGH SONY.





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× COVER STORY ×

BRING ME  
THE HORIZON

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YES WE DO





**SERIAL GAME CHANGERS BRING ME THE HORIZON HAVE NEVER HAD ANY QUALMS ABOUT UPTURNING EXPECTATIONS, AND IT'S ABOUT TO PAY OFF MORE THAN EVER ON ALBUM NUMBER FIVE. WHO KNEW THE LITTLE-SCENE-BAND-THAT-COULD WOULD GROW INTO THE VOICE OF A GENERATION? WELL, WE KIND OF DID.**

**WORDS BY DANIEL FURNARI**



It's finally happened. Bring Me The Horizon have transcended genres and scenes and set their foot firmly in the popular consciousness. Nine years ago you would have found fans having debates over whether or not Bring Me The Horizon were a deathcore or just a (in the words of drummer Matt Nicholls) "shitty death metal band". Now here we are trying to decide if they're pop yet. Go figure.

With frontman Oli Sykes off enjoying some pre-album-release downtime after just getting hitched to his long-time girlfriend the week before our interview, it's synth and production mastermind Jordan Fish and Matt Nicholls who are there to let us in on the best-kept secret in heavy music this year. *That's The Spirit*, their fifth album, is all at once their most widely accessible body of work and the most challenging to their existing fanbase.

"I think some people think it's going to be offensive to us to refer to us as 'pop metal' or whatever, but it's cool, I don't care. I like pop music as much as I like metal music. I think there's good music and bad music in almost every genre," ponders Fish.

When you think about it, we should have seen it coming. For years, all the signs have been there that Bring Me The Horizon were about to grab heavy music and drag it kicking and screaming back into contemporary mainstream awareness, whether you liked it or not. Their signing to Sony served as a kind of confirmation that the band were on the verge of becoming their generation's biggest metal ambassador – the Linkin Park or Slipknot of the metalcore wave.

When *Sempiternal* was released in 2013, new guy Fish admitted to **BLUNT** his fear of being "the guy that fucked up everyone's favourite heavy band", having little knowledge of the kind of role he would go on to play in the band. But with the events of the last two years under his belt, things were a lot different this time around.

"I guess now I'm a lot more confident – we're all a lot more confident with doing what we want with this album," says Fish. "It's not something we ever talk about, the question of how heavy it's going to be... We're more focused on whether we actually like what we're doing, and I hope that people can tell it's genuine and we're writing it simply because we like it."

That head-first confidence is plastered all over the new record – *That's The Spirit* is 150 percent committed to its sound with no ifs or buts about it. No exceptions, no tokenistic mosh tracks, no appeasement for the old fans, just a love-it-or-leave-it rock album from start to finish. There's a tendency for fans to buy into the myth of blaming a band's most commercial material on major label bigwigs and know-all producers, so it's somewhat



surprising to note that such an album is the first one produced entirely by the band. The decision to go DIY on the production side was something Bring Me The Horizon had begun to toy with in late 2014. Stand-alone single "Drown", which now reappears as a late cut on the new album, was all at once a practice run at having Fish act as producer, a creative testing-of-the-waters, and a booster for the biggest headline show of their career.

"Recording 'Drown' was Oli and Jordan's idea – the rest of the band took some convincing to do it," explains Nicholls. "But the idea was mainly just to put a song out to coincide with the Wembley Arena gig, and get people excited for that show."

"It was also a test in the way that we wanted to see if we could get away with a single that was just purely melodic, with no screaming, no breakdowns, and nothing super heavy in there," adds Fish. "I think we just wanted to see if we could pull it off and people would accept it."

And accept it they did. "Drown" became the band's highest-selling single to date and the newly released *Live At Wembley* DVD shows the track receiving a truly spine-tingling 10,000 person sing-along. The show was the final and crowning achievement of the *Sempiternal* cycle.

"It was just like a big pat on the back for us, just to say we've always stuck to our guns, we've always done what we wanted to do, and this is where it's

gotten us. I mean, it doesn't really get much bigger than Wembley Arena. We were just so relieved to be in that place and to have those fans," says Nicholls.

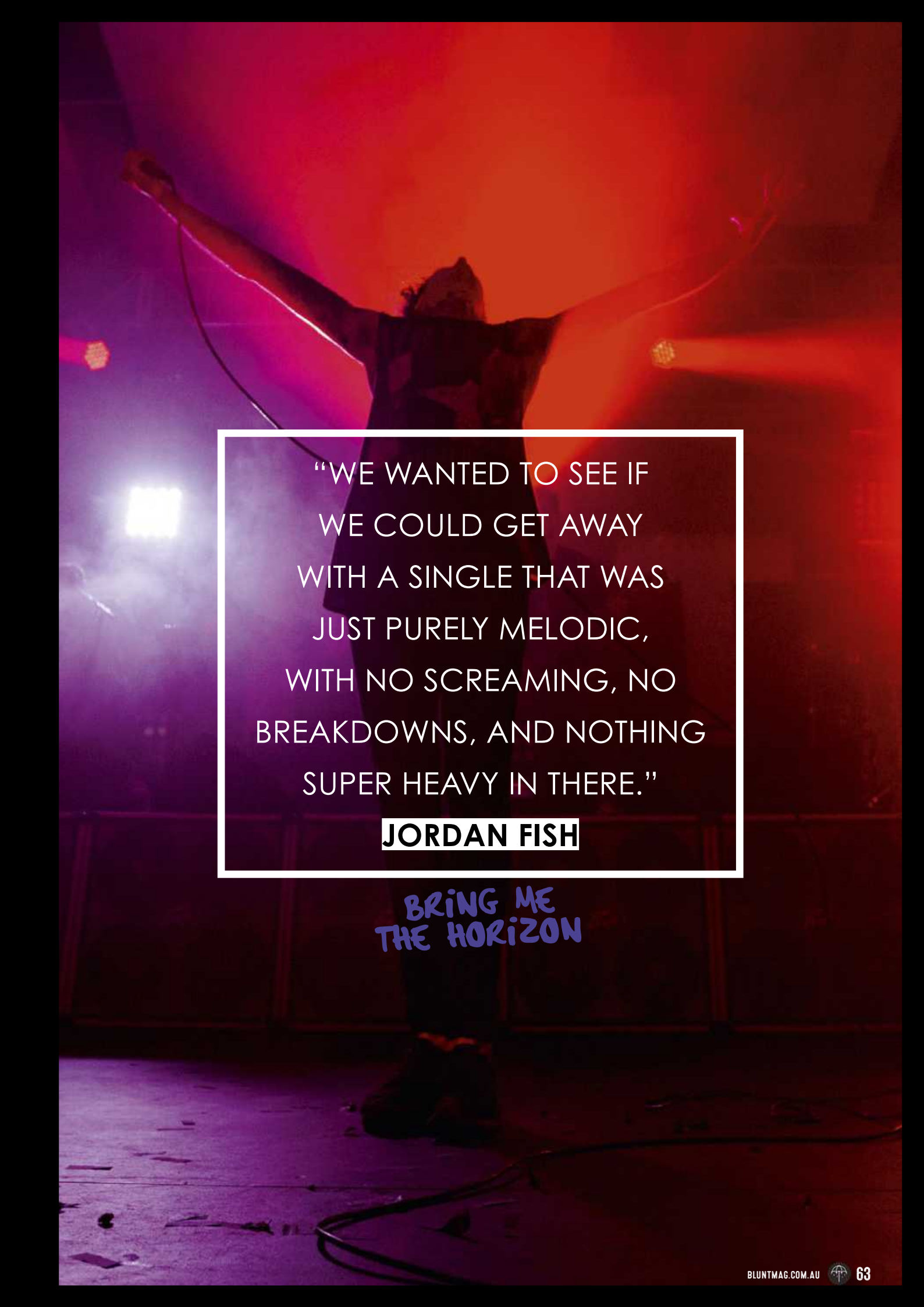
"It's a one-off show, which immediately ramps up the pressure because you haven't got another chance," adds Fish. "If you fuck it up, you fuck it up. And being the last cycle's last show of what was, for us, a really big, good couple of years, I think we wanted to end on a high, to come away feeling like it's the best show we'd ever played. And Wembley is just such an iconic venue in our country, so it was loaded with significance." Pretty funny for a band who once said, "We'll never sell out arenas".

"It's just weird... When they booked the Wembley show we said, 'Oh that will never sell out'. Or when people at labels were saying things like, 'We want to make you bigger than Metallica', that was another thing we laughed at – we just thought, 'Oh, it's nice that you want to do these things but it's never going to happen', but these things are coming true!" exclaims Nicholls. So with the reception to "Drown" and the subsequent success of Wembley Arena, it was settled: the band were comfortable both in their musical direction and ability to self-produce. With creative appetites piqued, they became

restless during their time off over the New Year and dove immediately into writing the album from scratch between January and March, with Sykes and Fish spearheading the creative direction as Nicholls, bassist Matt Kean and guitarist Lee Malia weighed in along the way to shape their own parts. It's easy to assume that the less guitar-centric album might have had less input from Malia – once the band's main writer – but Fish assures us this was not really the case.

"I think with the way the band has changed, Lee has just adapted his writing. In fact, if anything, I think Lee's guitar has more of a prominent role on the album, in that we were selective and tried to make it so that when the guitar was at the forefront, it really was at the forefront. Everything had its purpose. A lot of the guitar decisions and riffs were left up to Lee. Even though it was Oli and I producing, everyone had more control over their respective roles and I think it brought us closer as a band."

From there, the band relocated to picturesque Black Rock Studios in Santorini, Greece – a veritable "dream studio" if ever there was one. Situated on a hilltop with views of the Mediterranean, the studio was chosen, Nicholls claims, simply by Googling "best recording studios in the world". There they spent their down-time exercising with a personal trainer or riding quad bikes on the beaches ("So much better than shitty England!" laughs Nicholls)

A person is seen from behind, standing on a stage with their arms raised in a 'V' shape. They are wearing a dark, short-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The stage is bathed in vibrant red and purple light, with several spotlights visible in the background. The overall atmosphere is energetic and celebratory.

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**JORDAN FISH**

BRING ME  
THE HORIZON



# BRING ME THE HORIZON



and enjoying the isolation. Though Fish admits having found it hard at times with no one but his fellow bandmates to fall back on for creativity, the risk was worth the reward.

"That's all just part of the process for me – the psychological turmoil of doing the album. Personally, I think people put too much faith in a producer sometimes – they want someone to say, 'This is bad and this is good'. But I want to work it out for myself."

"We've never really taken anything from a producer other than them getting the sounds right and getting good takes and stuff," adds Nicholls, "but we didn't really need that because we have Jordan this time, and he's so brilliant at that. I think it just worked a lot better. We saved a lot of money by not having a big-name producer, and besides, the band's just more relaxed on our own." One would think that the pressure to top such a gargantuan album as *Sempiternal* must have been excruciating when writing time came around, but the band are refreshingly level-headed, almost blasé in their downplaying of the matter.

"I think there's no pressure, to be honest with you," says Nicholls. "I think we knew we had to do something good, but at the end of the day we want to do something good."

Fish, meanwhile, stays grounded by measuring their achievements against the true big guns of the charts: "You call it 'such a big album', but it depends on your perspective. It's big in a way, but if you asked Taylor Swift if it was a big album, she'd probably say not really! It's all about perspective. It did really well for us, but I don't think there's any limits on how successful we, or anyone else for that matter, can be. I think the moment a band gives up trying to push themselves further and thinks they've reached as far as they can go, then they've had it." While the album sees every member of the band pushing themselves to their creative limits, not for the first time it's Sykes who displays the greatest technical evolution. Having begun to explore his melodic capabilities with a decent smattering of clean singing and pitched sing-screaming amidst the usual roars on *Sempiternal*, the Oli we hear in 2015 has all but completely abandoned his old sound, with melody taking precedence over all and with a variety of new voices in his repertoire.

"It was definitely no accident, but at the same time it was kind of just the way things happened," says Fish. "The vocals came together, and Oli didn't feel the need, or feel that it was appropriate to scream."

For Fish as producer and writer, getting Sykes up to standard was nowhere near the battle it was when recording for *Sempiternal* began. Fish previously described Sykes' early *Sempiternal* demos to us as "honestly shocking; the sound of a man who could not sing" – a far cry from the vocal juggernaut we see now.

"He's improved so much obviously from the last couple of years of touring and stuff. He's taken lessons and as he's developed his technique, his vocal muscles have become stronger and his range has increased, and he's developed a more accurate ear."

"It's a never-ending process, as anyone who sings will tell you. Doing this album was a learning process for him as well; he's pushing himself even further and harder and trying more challenging melodies and stuff and he even had a teacher come out to Santorini to do some work with him."

"It's pretty amazing to be honest," agrees Nicholls, who has witnessed Sykes' growth since day one. "I've seen everything he goes through. I see his passion for it, his will to get better. This time it's just full on singing so it's pretty crazy to see him come from someone who just screams and can't sing whatsoever to someone who can sing a whole album."

The thought of a virtually screamless Bring Me The Horizon record has had many fans up in arms. But in reality, it really shouldn't be a surprise. Every Bring Me The Horizon album since *Count Your Blessings* (2006) has made people

"I THINK WE KNEW  
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GOOD."

**MATT NICHOLLS**

mad – from critics to fans. On 2008's *Suicide Season*, it was because they weren't playing deathcore anymore. On its 2010 follow-up, *There Is A Hell...*, it was because they had too much synth. On their last album, 2013's *Sempiternal*, it was because it was too rocky. Matt Nicholls has heard it all before. Upturning expectations is something he's long learned to take in his stride, and he cites bands like Arctic Monkeys and Radiohead among the acts that he himself admires for their unpredictable experimentation.

"When I was a kid and a band would put a new album out and it sounded a bit different, I'd be like, 'What the fuck is this?' But that's bullshit. As a band you need to progress as people and push yourselves as songwriters and as musicians, or you're just going to stay where you are, get bored and things are going to fall apart. You need to push on, and you'll reap benefits from that at the end of the day, and that's what this band has done."

"We started off playing shitty death metal, and now we're signing to Columbia and putting out this album. We weren't scared of change and I think that's what people need to do: just embrace it and be confident and crack on."

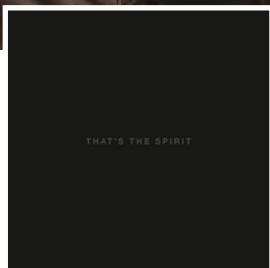
So for a band always thinking well into the future, what's next?

"Start our own religion," laughs Fish. **B**

**THAT'S THE SPIRIT**

**IS OUT SEPTEMBER 11 THROUGH SONY.**





# BRING ME THE HORIZON

THAT'S THE SPIRIT

Sony



**N**ever failing to surprise and challenge their die-hard listener base with each album, *That's The Spirit* sees Bring Me The Horizon push things further than ever with a collection of stadium-standard alt-rock anthems more suited to Glastonbury than Warped Tour. The question is, how much is too much?

In some regards, the content of *That's The Spirit* could be seen as the logical next step in their musical trajectory. These sounds and styles had already been more than hinted at on *Sempiternal* – tracks like “And The Snakes Start To Sing”, “Can You Feel My Heart?” and “Seen It All Before” come to mind – but if upbeat, aggressive cuts like “Antivist” or “House Of Wolves” were *Sempiternal*’s drawcard for you, be aware that you’ll find none of that here.

It’s that full-bore commitment to a unified creative vision that is *That's The Spirit*’s greatest strength, yet also potentially its Achilles heel for heavier-leaning fans. For perhaps the first time, Bring Me The Horizon have produced a record with no throwbacks to the *Suicide Season* days of outrageous mosh calls and downtuned riff

insanity. October 2014 single “Drown” signified a potentially major shift in direction but left fans wondering whether or not this was an outlying soft track or an all-out sonic revolution; it’s now abundantly clear that the band have taken a leap of faith right down the stylistic rabbit hole of “Drown” with no looking back.

The instantly memorable “Happy Song” has proved naturally divisive upon its early release despite being arguably the heaviest track on the album, but the cheerleader chants and nu metal-infused riffing it showcases are only the beginning. Through the driving synths of “Throne”, the RnB beats of the intro to “Follow You” or the moody indie grooves of “Oh No”, flavours ranging from Deftones and Linkin Park to alt-J and The 1975 rear their heads, unexpectedly but tastefully integrated. The entire record is evidence of just how much synth player/producer Jordan Fish has brought to the band since his induction in 2013.

Oli Sykes’ emotive yet tongue-in-cheek lyrics are just about the only thing linking the band to their early material – from the provocative gore

of lines like “You make me want to slit my wrists and play in my own blood” (“What You Need”), the clichés of “True friends stab you in the front” (“True Friends”), and gratuitous references to wolves. But it’s Sykes’ ever-increasing vocal range that takes the cake. With barely a trace of screaming to be heard through the album, Sykes powers his way through every enormous chorus and infectious verse with a confidence and finesse that would have you believe he’s been singing like this for years.

Ultimately, the reason this record works is that unlike many other bands who reach their fifth album, Bring Me The Horizon’s audience has aged remarkably well with them. Each installation in their diverse catalogue has filtered off fair-weather fans and trend-hoppers, while taking the rest eagerly along for the ride. Most of those that discovered them in their early days have, like the band, since widened their musical tastes and abandoned their studded belts and dyed fringes and ultimately learned to choose substance over style, and *That's The Spirit* has it by the gallon.

DANIEL FURNARI

## FIDLAR

Too

Warner



It's a bummer FIDLAR's new album is being released here during the winter, because the entire thing is an unabashed summertime jam. The Cali punks manage to compress the entirety of 20-something slackerdom into 40-minutes of music: getting wasted, growing up, failed relationships and everything in-between. They mediate on the highs as much as the lows, with lament-filled songs like "Stupid Decisions" and "Bad Habits", as well as the mournful "Overdose", whose soft melancholy explodes into a wall of sound. They're a band that excels at making the happy sounding sad song, as they kick out both the jams and their emotions, especially on tracks "40oz On Repeat" and "West Coast". Building on everything that made their first album great, *Too* feels like the next step for the band. If their self-titled was the party, this album is the morning after. **CHRIS NEILL**

## KNUCKLE PUCK

Copacetic

Rise



Another hotly tipped newcomer to the pop-punk scene, Chicago's Knuckle Puck have built a large sense of anticipation for *Copacetic* after a slew of well-received EPs. The result however is akin to a Kristy Kreme donut – great expectations with a middling payoff. The band display a strong knack for tight dynamics and a good sense of melody yet the songs on *Copacetic* end up sounding like any one of their myriad peers; rough melodic vocals, a touch raw on the production, the miserable outlook... it's all present and accounted for per The Story So Far playbook. It's better than when every man and his dog shamelessly ripped off New Found Glory, yet switching one idol for another doesn't do much in the scheme of things. A solid debut that doesn't seem to do enough to step out of the shadows of its influences. **SARAH O'CONNOR**

## AMORPHIS

Under The Red Cloud

Nuclear Blast



After more than 20 years of embracing an ever-evolving approach to songwriting, Finns Amorphis appear to have encountered an impasse. Their recent records have shifted towards a more accessible style that doesn't abandon their core sound and identity, which you'd think would culminate in an explosive effort on their latest release. Instead, *Under The Red Cloud* fumbles the juggling act by splitting their songwriting straight down the middle, resulting in a record that's half progressive genius and half uninspired fluff. The showmanship is there, but little flourishes are gone. The goth-tinged tone is still strong, but hints of doom are few and far between. Although far from objectively bad, Amorphis seem comfortable phoning it in half the time. **PETER ZALUZYNY**

## STRAY FROM THE PATH

Subliminal Criminals

UNFD



Stray From The Path are usually the sort of next-gen hardcore band that see unimaginative phrases like 'dive-bombing guitars', 'abrasive' and, well, 'next-gen hardcore' bandied about, but on their sixth album they plant their flag beyond hardcore's 'confused white boy' problems and deliver a meaty slab of rage. The ball trauma-causing power of tracks like "Outbreak", with its meaty riff-festival finale, sit in the shadow of "Badge & A Bullet Pt. II", the sort of song that was Rage Against The Machine's bread and butter, a railing against injustice and gun-toting ideological bullies. Sam Carter of Architects guests on the scathing "First World Problems" and the rage of "Eavesdropper" (featuring Enter Shikari's Rou Reynolds) puts forward a strong case for how powerful hardcore wearing political ideology on its sleeve (tattoo) can be. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**

## SOULFLY

Archangel

Nuclear Blast



Album number 10 is another love letter to extremity from Max Cavalera – note opener "We Sold Our Souls To Metal" is a furious mission statement – although doesn't neglect traces of accessibility, nor the Middle Eastern riffs and tripped-out nuances injecting exoticism. Soulfly's career has featured more star cameos than the *Entourage* movie. King Parrot's Youngy joins that illustrious list, screeching on pit party-starter "Live Life Hard!", and Todd Jones (Nails) provides "Sodomites" with a nastier edge. Lamentably there's no Emilia Clarke on "Mother Of Dragons", although Max's sons Richie and Igor flesh out another bruising track. Heavy metal is the Cavalera family business, after all. *Archangel* offers a hefty dose of grooving, thrashed-up fare courtesy of an outfit who know plenty about giving die-hard fans precisely what they want. **BRENDAN CRABB**

## TIRED LION

Figurine

Independent



From the moment the building feedback intro of "Pretend" gives way to slow, grungy verses centred around the charismatic vocals of Sophie Hopes, this EP flat out nails it. Bringing to mind America's Speedy Ortiz or the UK's Kid Wave, Perth quartet Tired Lion are the latest to ride the wave of female-fronted early '90s alt-rock revivalism, and they're riding it like fucking pros. "Suck" continues the loud-quiet dynamic with screechy guitars and an awesome bridge of overlapping vocals, while the abrasive lyrics and vocals of the verse of "I Don't Think You Like Me" sit wonderfully at odds with the melodic 'oohs' of its chorus. "Figurine" continues the raw, honest theme with lyrics about wasted time. Closer "December" comes far too soon, but offers a climactic solo that recalls Pixies at their finest. **TIM MARKLEW**



## DEFEATER

Abandoned

Epitaph



Defeater are taking you to church. This ain't no gospel affair, however – there are demons to be exorcised and sins to be confessed. Much like 2013's *Letters Home*, *Abandoned* is a remorseless and at times furious record, introducing a new protagonist to Derek Archambault's highly-conceptual and semi-linear lyricism in the form of a wartime priest. The imagery is vivid and often confronting, such is the power of both Archambault as a writer and performer and the stampede that runs alongside it. If you have found yourself captivated by this band's tactful and sharp take on post-hardcore, there's a good chance that trend will continue into this new territory. *Abandoned* is the sound of a band taking reinvention and redemption deadly seriously. **DAVID JAMES YOUNG**



## DEAD LETTER CIRCUS

Aesthesis

UNFD

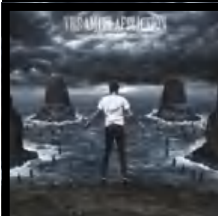
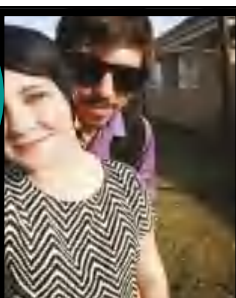


After the highly technical *The Catalyst* Fire, Dead Letter Circus are dialling back the chops. The anthemic drama of old is still there, but *Aesthesis* finds the band unafraid to hold back the intensity now and then. Losing clutter leaves room for big hooks, like the fat, grungy riff of "The Burning Number" or vocalist Kim Benzie's impassioned call for awareness on lead single "While You Wait". The mysterious and moody "Silence" finds them confidently pushing into new territory, gradually moving from whisper quietness to a triumphant, delay-soaked climax. Although the second half of the album is a touch uneven, this is still Dead Letter Circus placing their best foot forward. Ample hooks should pick up new converts, while longtime fans will find their favourite band alive and kicking. **MICHAEL ADDISON**

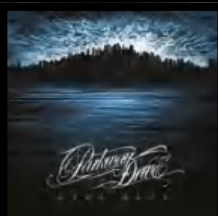


# BLUNT READER'S TOP 5

## FORREST ADAMS & RHIANNON GORE



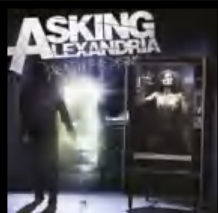
## THE AMITY AFFLICTION *Let The Ocean Take Me*



## PARKWAY DRIVE *Deep Blue*



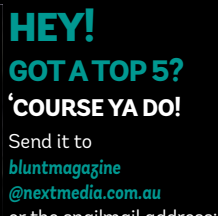
## NORTHLANE *Node*



## ASKING ALEXANDRIA *From Death To Destiny*



## WE CAME AS ROMANS *Tracing Back Roots*



## HEY! GOT A TOP 5? 'COURSE YA DO!



## WAVVES X CLOUD NOTHINGS *No Life For Me* Ghost Ramp

Clocking in at a neat, criminally short 20 minutes, *No Life For Me* combines the best parts of Cloud Nothings and Wavves to form an insanely fun record. The two musicians are opposite sides of the garage-punk coin; Cloud Nothings' Dylan Baldi is the introspective artist type, whereas Wavves' Nathan Williams is the laid-back stoner who's looking to party. These different personalities mesh together perfectly as their distinct takes on the same genre complement one another; on "Come Down" a melancholy Baldi chants the song's chorus over the fuzz-filled, distinctly Wavves-sounding guitars, while standout tracks "How It's Gonna Go" and "No Life For Me" are proof that both bands are two of the most interesting lo-fi rock acts putting out records in 2015.

CHRIS NEILL

## BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME

*Coma Ecliptic*  
Metal Blade



These lads have ruined countless speakers and pants since their inception. When prog-metallers BTBAM announced this concept album via a tweet, fan-boy fapping only increased. The otherworldly story is understandably ethereal and crushing, but with less misused space. King Crimson ("The Coma Machine") and Pink Floyd (the expansive "Memory Palace") are obvious touchstones, compounded by Queen-esque chord progressions and lush keys. Thick, textural bass work adds heft. Greater emphasis on Tommy Rogers' clean vocals pays dividends, with the serene melodies of LP highlight "Turn On The Darkness" juxtaposed by vein-popping growls. They can risk straining something, such as the inclination to back-slap one another in congratulations of technical capacities, but the songs take priority.

BRENDAN CRABB



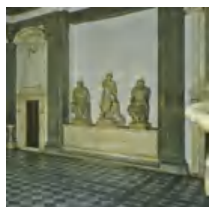
## DUCKTAILS

*St. Catherine*  
Domino



*St. Catherine* is the fifth release from Ducktails, often referred to as the side project of Real Estate guitarist Matt Mondanile (despite him being in Ducktails longer). Whichever band you most associate him and his signature guitar sound with, this is another instantly recognisable release, with opener "The Disney Afternoon" and final song "Reprise" bookending the album with typically pretty and blissed-out guitar pop. The album's guest musicians provide some of the album's most interesting moments, like "Headbanging In The Mirror" featuring James Ferraro and the Cocteau Twins-esque vocals of Julia Holter combining with strings on "Heaven's Room" to make the album's nicest song. As with Real Estate, *St. Catherine* is occasionally hazy and washed out to the point of being cold and formulaic, but it's impossible to deny the surface beauty.

TIM MARKLEW



## CAULFIELD

*Outcast*  
Halfcut/Shock



The second album from Sydney's Caulfield has been delivered by a new look line-up that's hard to miss – former vocalist Mahan Shishineh replaced by Villa Rise frontman Jarrod Martin, whose position was cemented with the first taste of this album, its most epic track, "Smoke & Mirrors", late last year. In possession of the prerequisite pipes for the role (a blurgh on opening track "Call My Name" assures us), the berating screams are balanced with a hefty amount of very sincere clean singing, a coupling that pretty well sums up the melodically injected riff-heavy hardcore these guys play. Speaking of riffs, the intro to "Tear Myself Apart" is fantastic, and "Blind Faith" (a sure contender for a third single after "Hell Inside My Head") is packed with them – and all of them are great.

DAVE DRAYTON



## GATHERER

*Heavy Hail*

Red Tape/MGM



Changing up your band's style is one thing. Doing it in a manner so dramatically that it will have one not just double-, but triple-checking that it's the same band is another. This is the case with Wellington quartet Gatherer, FKA This City Sunrise and former purveyors of chaotically-patterned math-core. *Heavy Hail* is the band's second album since their name-change; and the record sees them attempting a sound that is best compared to that of post-*The Fragile* Nine Inch Nails. It's dense, industrial-tinged rock that dips into third-wave post-hardcore... in other words, it's really quite odd. What inspired such a left-of-centre departure from their established sound is anyone's guess, but perhaps *Heavy Hail*'s biggest flaw is that even it is not entirely convinced of itself. Overlong and melodramatic, this is a confused album from a clearly confused band.

DAVID JAMES YOUNG



## WE LOST THE SEA

*Departure Songs*

Art As Catharsis



After the tragic loss of their vocalist Chris Torpy in 2012, the now-instrumental We Lost The Sea have crafted a compelling exploration of courage and human frailty in *Departure Songs*. This is no reinvention of the post-rock wheel – the admiration of Mogwai, Godspeed You! Black Emperor and ISIS is clear – but the soft-to-loud dynamics are handled with a deft, cinematic flair. Short on hooks and long on atmosphere, this style of music is not for everyone (especially if the idea of a 30-minute song about NASA's tragic Challenger mission makes your eyes glaze over). But those who are willing to put on the headphones, close their eyes and drift with the soundscapes will find deep songcraft and sincere emotion. The achingly gorgeous slow burn found driving "The Last Dive Of David Shaw" is almost worth the price of admission alone.

MICHAEL ADDISON



## GUS G

*Brand New Revolution*

Century Media



Between Firewind, Ozzy Osbourne, Dream Evil, Nightrage and Arch Enemy, Gus G has established himself as a bona fide guitar hero with a distinctly European approach: neoclassical motifs, straightforward-yet-epic riffs, screaming solos. On *Brand New Revolution* he further explores the territory visited on *I Am The Fire*, kicking the big choruses up a notch and pushing his guitar playing into even more insane levels of skill. There are plenty of guests too, including former Yngwie Malmsteen vocalists (Mats Levén and Jeff Scott Soto), Jacob Bunton, Elize Ryd, Marty O'Brien (Lita Ford, Tommy Lee) and Firewind bandmate Johan Nunez. While Gus's songwriting is clearly influenced by '80s hard rock and metal, this is that rarest of guitarist solo albums: something that you don't have to be a guitarist to love.

PETER HODGSON



## GUARDS OF MAY

### Future Eyes

Pricewar Music/MGM



Before *Future Eyes*, the debut album from Brisbane band Guards Of May, even hit shelves, there had been three singles lifted from it: "Arcadia", "Annotate", and way back in 2013, "Numbers" – no small feat for a band who straddle a divide between prog rock and metal. The touch of producer Matt Bartlem, having previously worked with the likes of The Getaway Plan and Dead Letter Circus, in this instance cannot be overlooked – like those acts, Guards Of May do pop music in the style of metal, unafraid of hooks or the histrionics of stadium rock. Beyond what we've already been privy to "The Observer" and "Of Kings" deliver some great riffs, and the title track bridges both halves of the record brilliantly, encapsulating in miniature the band's range. A solid taste of what's to come.

DAVE DRAYTON



## BEAUTIFUL BODIES

### Battles

Epitaph/Warner



Too much of a pop band for rock radio, too much of a rock band for pop radio. Beautiful Bodies make music that doesn't fit in – and not in an edgy, outsider way. More in the sense that their music was nothing before you heard it, is nothing when you hear it, and nothing when you press stop. Which will be quite early on, it has to be noted – *Battles*, the band's debut LP through punk label Epitaph, is one that is practically defined by its plasticity and transparency. There are more "whoah-oh"s on this record than Billie Joe Armstrong could poke a stick at; and anything resembling actual instrumentation sounds like a GarageBand demo with some production filters on top. "I don't give a damn about running with the in-crowd," Alicia Solombrino sings on "Invincible." Yeah right, kid.

DAVID JAMES YOUNG



## NILE

### What Should Not Be Unearthed

Nuclear Blast



Nile have been roaring their way through ancient history for some time, but now it feels like they're running out of steam. *What Should Not Be Unearthed* starts off on a fairly predictable path, with all the ultra heavy technical riffage, slow sludgy darkness and interlinked Eastern tones you'd expect. The initial execution of this tried and tested technique is pretty weak, however, with little in the way of creative ambition. Things pick up after a few tracks as *What Should Not...* gradually develops into a fairly decent record, but while the music is impressive in its technical complexity, it's far from compelling. Most of the record chugs along on a formulaic base heightened by a handful of interesting riffs, taps and short solos. There's just not enough on show for anyone except hardcore Nileists.

PETER ZALUZYNY

## MISS MAY I

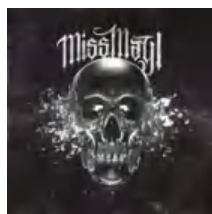
### Deathless

Rise/Warner



Positioning themselves as the defenders of true metalcore may have seemed an odd path to take for Ohio headbangers Miss May I, but it seems now, finally, the quintet have truly attained their goal with *Deathless*. The (un)necessary evil of clean vocals are more integrated and natural sounding than ever before; check out "The Artificial" for proof. The NWOAHM hallmarks Miss May I trade on are present and accounted for, the aggression and speed pleasantly dialled up from previous releases and even the shredding has stepped up. All of this makes for a satisfying listen that stands apart from the crowd of safe, neutered songwriting a lot of the band's peers are indulging in. They're no Pantera, sure, but if you're looking for a fix ahead of the new Parkway and Killswitch records, you could do worse than *Deathless*.

SARAH O'CONNOR



## BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE

### Venom

Sony



BFMV's song-craft can appear about as organic as the ingredients of a can of Mother. One foot lodged in metal and the other in arena-rock yearning, they've managed to appease both audiences and become a widely popular gateway act without truly succeeding at either creatively. Flagged as their heaviest release yet, this collection nonetheless still doesn't quite evade the sensibility that selected tunes could've almost been assembled by a focus group, so immaculate is the production and meticulous the arrangements. "Army Of Noise"'s thrash riffs or the energised "Worthless" can request repeat listens, and a knack for anthemic hooks on "You Want A Battle? (Here's A War)" will elicit fan favourites. However, suggestions of pre-packaged angst may make *Venom* difficult to swallow for more discerning listeners.

BRENDAN CRABB



## HEALTH

### Death Magic

Caroline



Easing the pain of Crystal Castles's messy public break-up, their one-time collaborators Health make a timely return with their third album, *Death Magic*. Beginning with slow, industrial banging and ominous synths, "Victim" hints at another dark release in the mold of 2009's abrasive *Get Color*, and it certainly delivers that at times. The noise pop of "Stonefist" is earsplitting, while the high octane "Men Today" would have been worth exploring beyond its two minutes, and the crazy intense bursts of percussion on "Courtship II" and "Salvia" border on obscene. Yet, as the album progresses, "Dark Enough" and "Life" begin to show Health's softer side. "L.A. Looks" and "Drugs Exist" are possibly the most accessible "dance music" that the band have ever produced, with clean vocals and magnetic beats.

TIM MARKLEW



## NECK DEEP

### Life's Not Out To Get You

Hopeless/UNFD



Neck Deep have been a band for a shade over three years, yet here we are already checking out their second LP. Given their rabid embrace by the pop-punk faithful, the work ethic is no surprise but the quality of the songwriting certainly is. Sidestepping the very large, obvious genre traps of plagiarising Blink-182 or New Found Glory, they also avoid falling into the sad boy tr00nami plaguing punk bands. Opener "Citizens Of Earth" is a great example – aggressive rock guitars with grittier vocals and a big melodic hook set the tone. *Life's Not Out To Get You* is as catchy as you'd expect, possessing the same vague familiarity of producer Jeremy McKinnon's day job without sounding a thing like them; this is rock solid pop-punk devoid of gimmicks that will only push Neck Deep further into the stratosphere.

SARAH O'CONNOR



## FRANK CARTER & THE RATTLESNAKES

### Blossom

Kobalt



Since leaving UK punk's anointed saviours Gallows, Frank Carter's career has been, ah, 'varied'. Putting aside Pure Love and tattooing for the moment, Carter's new band The Rattlesnakes have helped push him to make what's easily his most bracing, if not downright crucial, album since Gallows' *Grey Britain*. Carter's throat is the engine that powers *Blossom* at a white-hot heat; a raw, tightly-wound vocal spring of frustration and anger that loudly and brashly sits above like a deranged punk emperor surveying a battlefield and grinning maniacally at the death and destruction he's wrought. The best part, though, is that amid the purging of pissed-offedness, burn-it-all-down sentiment *Blossom* balances its weightiness with a freeing, nihilistic furiousness.

JAYMZ CLEMENTS





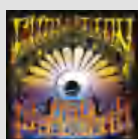


## WITH MICHAEL DAWSON OF HAND OF MERCY



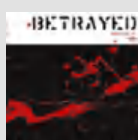
### TAKING HOLD

**Startup Cult**  
Allday



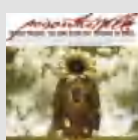
### LOST IN BABYLON

**Evolution**  
(hed) p.e.



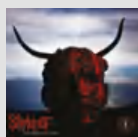
### UNDERSTAND

**Addiction**  
Betrayed



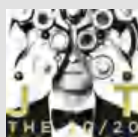
### MEETING AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME

**You Come Before You**  
Poison The Well



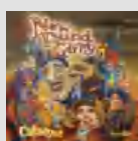
### BEFORE I FORGET

**Antennas To Hell**  
Slipknot



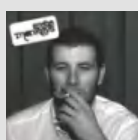
### SUIT & TIE

**The 20/20 Experience**  
Justin Timberlake



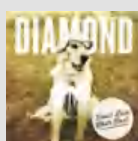
### TRUTH OF MY YOUTH

**Catalyst**  
New Found Glory



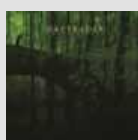
### RED LIGHT INDICATES DOORS ARE SECURE

**Whatever People Say I  
Am, That's What I'm Not**  
Arctic Monkeys



### FIX OF MINE

**Don't Lose Your Cool**  
Diamond Youth



### IF YOU NEED IT

**Twelve Years**  
Daytrader

## STORIES

### The Youth To Become

UNFD



Given their unofficial apprenticeship under the guidance of Northlane guitarist Josh Smith, it is unsurprising that UNFD snapped up the debut LP from Sydney five-piece Stories. With music cut from a similar cloth to that of their mentor's metal magnate, on first listen it is difficult to ascertain what exactly makes Stories stand out – there is, after all, no shortage of new bands influenced by Northlane's conceptually rigorous (if extravagant) prog/post-metal. Unfortunately, little changes with subsequent listens – it's well enough composed and capably enough preformed, but for all the hoopla and aggression it feels largely homogeneous. That being said, tracks like "Waves Of Me" and the combination of the instrumental "Shadow Window" and following track "The Golden Thread" are most promising in their efforts to depart from the mould. **DAVE DRAYTON**



## KEN MODE

### Success

Season Of Mist



Given that *Success* is an abrasive cacophony of brutal, face-melting, endlessly inventive post-punk, it's no huge surprise that it bears Steve Albini's production mark. The Winnipeg band's sixth album takes its cues from the scuzzy post-hardcore of Drive Like Jehu and Albini's oeuvre of Big Black and Shellac; unhinged lead single "These Tight Jeans" is full of headlong-hurling post-rock as vocalist Jesse Mathewson's anti-modern man sentiments are laid out, barking "I would like to learn how to kill/The nicest man in the world" (and contrasting nicely with guest vocalist, Blackhound's Jill Clapham). *Success*, er, success lies in its deft songwriting on the proto-rage of "I Just Like Fire" and the Die! Die! Die!-channeling "A Catalog Of Small Disappointments", making for an avalanche of brain-shredding, no-quarter-asked-for primal punk rock. **JAYMZ CLEMENTS**



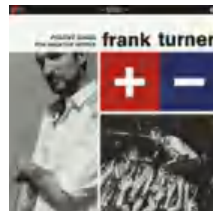
## FRANK TURNER

### Positive Songs For Negative People

Universal



The last time **BLUNT** spoke to Mr. Turner, he promised us album number six would be more "piss and vinegar" than 2013's weepy *Tape Deck Heart*, his "break up record". Frank Turner makes good on his word with *Positive Songs For Negative People*, for which he tried to deliver the feel of a debut album. The folk/punk favourite and his band sound refreshed and hopeful, with rollicking, carpe freakin' diem ditties like "Out Of Breath" and mission statement "Get Better". "If life gives you demons, make a deal" advises Turner, and it's a relief to hear him get back to telling us to get on with it, because that's the only damn right thing to do. The tone is far more "Try This At Home" than "Plain Sailing", and we're enormously grateful. Welcome back. **BRENT BALINSKI**



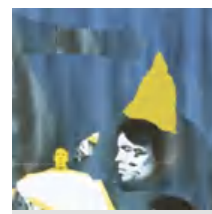
## VENNART

### The Demon Joke

Superball Music



Former Oceansize frontman Mike Vennart's debut solo album (former Oceansize bandmates Steve Durose and Richard 'Gambler' Ingram pop up too) is exactly as quirky and unique as one would hope. Emotional melodies give way to electronic noise, greasy synth blips graft themselves onto Black Sabbath riffs and haunting piano lines, and grinding basses grunt underneath vocals that approach Mike Patton levels of characterisation and colour. There's so much going on here that it'll take you weeks to digest it all, and even when it doesn't quite hit (like "Rebirthmark", parts of which sound like Zappa's *Lumpy Gravy* meets John Mayer via MIDI ringtone) it's still an intriguing and rewarding experience that doesn't give you all the answers but invites you to hit 'play' again to see if you just missed them. Extra points for naming a song "Duke Fame". **PETER HODGSON**



## THE BUNNY THE BEAR

### A Liar Wrote This

Victory



By far the coolest thing about much derided New York "post-hardcore" weirdos The Bunny The Bear is that Frank Gallagher, the drunken piece of shit patriarch on the US version of TV series *Shameless*, often wears one of their shirts. *A Liar Wrote This* explores a sonic palette in the same realms as the very primitive offerings of the nascent scream scene of the early '00s with none of the positives, the screeching vocals of "The Bunny" as irritating as possible while latest "The Bear", this time a young lady named Haley Roback, does her best to smooth out the damage with limited singing. While an act like Iwrestledabearonce have grown to mesh their off-kilter sensibilities with songwriting chops for a cohesive whole, The Bunny The Bear seem content to give no fucks. And neither do we. **SARAH O'CONNOR**



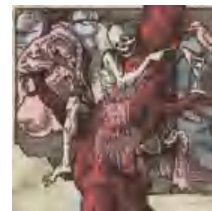
## A SECRET DEATH

### Epilogue

Monolith



Following a few civilian years, A Secret Death roared back into action last year releasing a split 7" with fellow technically inclined heavy-hitters Safe Hands. And now arrives an even heftier artefact, the appropriately titled *Epilogue*, an inauspicious and compellingly uncomfortable postscript to those years in the early-to-mid 2000s. The galloping tempo of "Barfly" feels like it's being kept by a panel beater, and it's a testament to the songwriting that amidst this much chaos a chorus can somehow emerge; the same can be said for the surprisingly uplifting "Falls Into Place". Though it's all about eight-minute closer "Lay Waste To The Sky", which sounds like the band recruited the horn section from Beirut and attempted to write an new anthem for the Sith Empire. **DAVE DRAYTON**



## DISTURBED

### Immortalized

Warner



While some contemporaries (\*coughKorn\*cough\*) have been steadily sliding down festival bills for years, hard rock mega-stars Disturbed return from hiatus with their rabid following salivating for new material. *Immortalized* is crowd-pleasing; in this instance, that essentially means patently slick, sanitised and accessible. "Open Your Eyes" and rock radio-ready "The Light" were evidently penned with arena sing-a-longs in mind, and there's a slew of tunes suitable for adoption as WWE pay-per-view themes. Covering Simon & Garfunkel's "The Sound Of Silence" is a well-intentioned misfire, David Draiman a tad lost within the vocal histrionics. Fans will ultimately incorporate a handful or so cuts, like the stomping title track or catchy "Who", into tailor-made "best of" Spotify playlists, and likely discard the rest.

BRENDAN CRABB



## THE SWORD

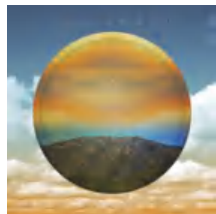
### High Country

Razor & Tie



Hailing from Austin, Texas, The Sword are very good at what they do. They've consistently put out some of the best examples of what the stoner metal genre has to offer – and *High Country* is no exception. "Empty Temples", "Suffer No Fools" and "Mist And Shadow" blast out those fantastic, crunchy desert riffs, which seem to have grooved their way right out of the '70s. The band occasionally mixes it up with brief genre experiments, leading to some interesting tracks that place a heavy emphasis on the "High" in *High Country*. With a name like "Unicorn Farm" you get a song as big as you'd expect, while the minimalist synth of "Agartha" sounds like it was ripped from a John Carpenter soundtrack. The Sword seem to improve with each release, and they were already pretty good to begin with.

CHRIS NEILL



## BURIED IN VERONA

### Vultures Above, Lions Below

UNFD



It's been a weird couple of years for Buried In Verona. Abandoned by many fans as they watched themselves get Nickelbacked ("when it becomes cool for people to hate on your band") somewhere between 2012's *Notorious* and 2014's *Faceless*, the band have finally found themselves back on their feet with a new line-up save for vocalists Brett Anderson and Richie Newman. *Vultures Above, Lions Below* benefits well from the band's more in-depth exploration of anthemic rock sing-alongs and nu metal grooves. Anderson, whose voice growls became the most widely criticised aspect of the band, unveils a newfound talent for clean vocals here, crooning the verses of "Can't Be Unsaid" in a voice strongly reminiscent of Corey Taylor's more sensitive moments.

KIERAN FREESE



## MEAT WAVE

### Delusion Moon

SideOneDummy/Cooking

Vinyl



Throw a rock these days and you're bound to hit some up-and-coming lo-fi punk band. Whether or not they're any good is another story entirely. In a sea of fuzzed-out noise, Chicago trio Meat Wave are definitely one band worth your time – they're just plain good. On paper, it shouldn't work; singer Chris Sutter's voice is a nasally whine and their instrumentals aren't exactly reinventing the wheel. But by some punk rock miracle, they make it incredibly palatable and what you get is an album overflowing with energy. Just try not to enjoy the aptly titled "Witchcraft", which ensnares you with its bass hook, while "Erased" devours you with its pure punk vigour. The album unfortunately opens with its whiniest track, "Delusion Moon", but after that it's smooth sailing. Y'know, as smooth as frantic garage punk can be.

CHRIS NEILL



## GOLD CLASS

### It's You

Spunk/Felt



Melbourne four-piece Gold Class's debut LP proves that often, one defining feature is enough for a band to get noticed. In this case, whilst their tight post-punk is competent and occasionally exciting, singer Adam Curley's deep, distinctive baritone is what will make or break this band. With Ian Curtis, and even Morrissey at times, as your template, it's not always possible to hit those heights, but it's an impressive return for a band that only formed in 2014 and *It's You* recalls Protomartyr and fellow Aussie post-punkers Mere Women. The spiky "Furlong" places those vocals front and centre, while the screechy guitars and throbbing basslines of "Life As A Gun" and "Bite Down" are pacy enough to make you move, before the slower, downbeat "Half Moon Over" and piano-led ballad "Shingles (Stay A While)" offer something different in the second half.

TIM MARKLEW



## THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

### Space

Rise/Warner



Ohio metalcore collective The Devil Wears Prada have tapped into their conceptual side once more, trading zombies for aliens on the aptly titled *Space* EP. Narrowly escaping monotony and feeding us a surprisingly tolerable amount of Mike Hranica, the record spans a comfortable six tracks – everything is generously overproduced and unsurprisingly formulaic, but somehow it works, and damn well at that. Equal parts atmospheric and cataclysmic, *Space* beckons a more contrasted sound from the Christian quartet as crushing drums, gritty riffs and raspy growls flow with waves of sparkling textural effects and meticulously layered clean vocals. Those after something left of field will be disappointed, but as far as stock standard metalcore goes, this is some top notch shit.

MATT DORIA



## SOILWORK

### The Ride Majestic

Nuclear Blast



There are rare instances when a reviewer's initial reaction is to sit back, utter "wow", and ponder doing such a triumphant display proper justice. This album's opening track – packing a chorus as infectious as that nasty strain of flu doing the rounds – is one example. Having recaptured their mojo a few albums back, a darker tone pervades throughout, and the Swedes expand their template by flirting with varying song structures. Fear not – as indicated, potent, soaring hooks remain a staple of their melodic death ear-gasms. "Speed" Strid reinforces that few execute the bipolar vocal caper with such panache and conviction, subsequently stretching his own parameters on "Death In General". His bandmates are suitably hungry too, tearing into bangers like "Alight In The Aftermath".

BRENDAN CRABB



## GHOST

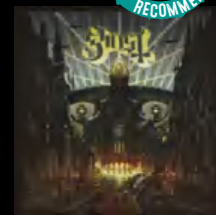
### Meliora

Spinefarm/Caroline



Behold, Lucifer is reborn and his unholy children are here to present his domination of man. As the grand event in the lineage, namely Satan's rebirth, has passed, *Meliora* can come off as less entertaining compared to *Infestissumam*. But its effect is much more subtle than a spectacle – instead it's designed to be an ominous presence that slowly emits a dark, yet intoxicating atmosphere that's simply impossible to escape. *Meliora* is calmer, tighter, direct and to the point as if to say, "Beelzebub is back, and you may join him or be destroyed". As such, empires willingly fall under his influence to the tune of Ghost's contemporary take on classic metal with doomy undertones. The complexity of this band and the mysticism they've created is fascinating, proving once and for all that they're so much more than the sum of their masks.

PETER ZALUZYNY

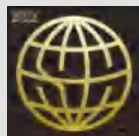




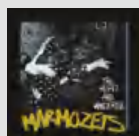
# BLUNT

## MIX TAPE

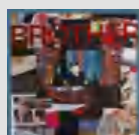
### CURRENTLY JAMMING AT BLUNT HQ



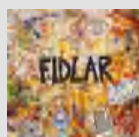
**SECRETS**  
Around The World And Back  
State Champs



**WHY DO YOU HATE ME?**  
The Weird And Wonderful  
Marmozets



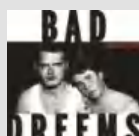
**MYSTERY**  
Brother  
Meat Wave



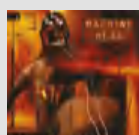
**WHY GENERATION**  
Too  
FIDLAR



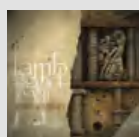
**WAY TOO MUCH**  
V  
Wavves



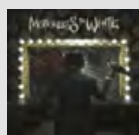
**HIDING TO NOTHING**  
Dogs At Bay  
Bad//Dreems



**DAVIDIAN**  
Burn My Eyes  
Machine Head



**512**  
VII: Sturm und Drang  
Lamb Of God



**AMERICA**  
Infamous  
Motionless In White

## MOTÖRHEAD

**Bad Magic**

UDR/Warner



Recent health setbacks sadly indicate that Lemmy isn't immortal, but his tenacious dedication to heavy rawk is impenetrable, even four decades in. Indefatigable cohorts help; Mikkey Dee batters the kit like he caught it breaking into his house, and Phil Campbell's bluesy licks are tasty. Not on par with, say, 2004's watershed *Inferno*, but it's archetypal Motörhead: Few surprises and certainly zero bullshit. There are by-the-numbers moments, and rollicking "Thunder & Lightning" echoes past glories, but the intent of "Choking On Your Screams" driving rhythms prevents a half-baked retread. Lemmy wrapping his gruff, Jack Daniels-soaked vocal chords around a gritty rendition of The Stones' "Sympathy For The Devil" presents an appropriate ground zero for a group whose innate desire to punish eardrums is ageless.

BRENDAN CRABB



## POP EVIL

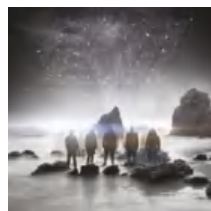
**Up**

eOne Music



With two Billboard Top 50 albums under their collective belts, Pop Evil have a lot to live up to with album number three. Interestingly, while the first album was inspired by classic rock and the second was heavier, *Up* seems to be more pointed towards radio airplay. Pop Evil mostly get the balance right, hanging catchy melodies on an almost Jimmy Page-like looseness and bold modern production. It doesn't work every time ("Take It All" feels especially contrived) but when it does work it's undeniable, like on "Ghost Of Muskegon", a clear standout which balances strong melody with shimmer atmospherics and heavy crunch in equal measure. If a criticism can be pointed at Pop Evil it's that they haven't quite created a unique sound yet: at times the production and seemingly forced songwriting obscures the band's collective voice.

PETER HODGSON



## RELENTLESS

**Price Of Pain**

Resist



True to their name, this Sydney-based hardcore crew never let up. *Price Of Pain*'s onslaught of brief midtempo thrashers, in the old-school NYHC style, is no doubt accomplished. The band is tight and moves with a gnarly, spiky confidence, but your mileage may vary depending on how committed to this sound you are. Aficionados of excellent pit riffment will find plenty to enjoy here, but casual listeners could end up wishing there was a bit more variety on offer. While each riff and performance is done right, the songs have a tendency to blur together. Still, Relentless hit the mark often enough, with songs like "Damaged" and "Blue Rage" proving their capacity to be both aggressive and memorable. It's this authenticity and commitment that keep *Price Of Pain* a worthwhile listen up until the end.

MICHAEL ADDISON



## SENTINEL

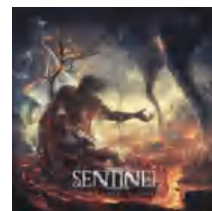
**The Primordial Ruin**

Independent



"Progressive metal" is an odd tag that means we're just as likely to get the effects of DJ scratching rendered with djent guitar tones as a genuinely expansive and forward-thinking approach to the genre. While Sentinel are guilty of the former, they've also achieved the latter with their second EP. From one guitar, a cold mechanical crunch is issued, orchestrating breakdowns and providing the kind of mordant crunch you'd expect from a record that has a burning bush and not one, not two, but three hurricanes gracing its front cover. Complementing that is an incomparably warm, crystal clear guitar that meanders in a manner similar to the licks from the ever-so-slightly-more-mathy Chon. At times baffling, but utterly listenable, this rules – and Mark Poida's guests on "Nadir" are a fucking terrifying bonus.

DAVE DRAYTON



## DEAF WISH

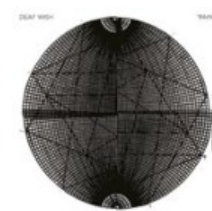
**Pain**

Sub Pop/Inertia



Melbourne's Deaf Wish fold trauma and deadpan humour into skewed, broken-down pop in the finest of outsider tradition. They're at their most likeable when they let loose with the skittish, off-kilter riffs of "Pain" and "On", coalescing into a twitching, nervous pop powerhouse; the play between Sarah Hardiman's vocals and those of her male counterparts switches moods and points of view with disturbing ease, and the riffs hover at the cliff-edge of familiar and understanding, always threatening to jump off, but never quite doing so. The most light-hearted moment comes in the woogy, ramshackle pop of "Sunset's Fool", but the revelatory aspect of *Pain* lies in the quieter aspects – "Sex Witch" and "Calypso", or the strung out "Dead Air". It's hard, though, to ignore just how great and totemic of Deaf Wish the rolling paranoid pop messes of "Eyes Closed" and "They Know" are.

JAYM CLEMENTS



## COUNTERPARTS

**Tragedy Will Find Us**

Pure Noise/Sony



It felt as though Counterparts were finally ready to ascend to the next level with 2013's *The Difference Between Hell And Home*, a record that asserted itself amid the best punk and hardcore records of the year with the confidence of a band twice their age. *Tragedy...*, its follow-up, asserts the band's worth and keeps them mounted in the upper echelon of their genre. It's potentially the angriest record the band have put their name to, albeit one that is channelled through contrastive means to the formula laid out prior. It's a catharsis that points inward, turning the weapon on itself and opening fire. Although it's worth mentioning that it does not quite hit the same peaks as *Hell And Home*, it's also worth mentioning that this is an album trying for something considerably different.

DAVID JAMES YOUNG



# ON THE RECORD WITH FRANK TURNER



**What was the first album or single you ever bought with your own money and where did you buy it?**

Iron Maiden, *Number Of The Beast*, from a record shop in Winchester, probably Our Price. My dad bought me a copy of *Killers* and I fell in love with it, and started saving up my pocket money so I could get their whole back catalogue.

**What one album changed your life more than any other and in what way?**

That's an almost impossible question. I suppose *August And Everything After* by Counting Crows is a contender. My older sister was listening to it just as I was starting to learn how to play guitar, so I ended up learning all the songs as they're easy to play. In the process I accidentally learned how to write songs – I think Adam Duritz is one of the songwriting greats, and in a way it still underpins most of my thinking on the subject now.

**What is one album or song that reminds you of your childhood?**

Flanders & Swann, *At The Drop Of A Hat*. My folks used to play it for me in the car. I sort of rediscovered them in recent years; I'm really into

composer Noël Coward, music hall and the like. It's wonderful stuff.

**What album did you jam the most during your high school years?**

Probably *Pinkerton* by Weezer. It bridged my younger interest in grunge and indie and so on, and my later obsession with post-hardcore, emo and all that. It remains a hugely influential album. Certainly my new record, *Positive Songs For Negative People*, is a sonic nod to this album.

**What album instantly puts you in a good mood?**

Converge's *You Fail Me*. It makes me want to punch through walls. I often listen to it right before I go on-stage for a full band show, as it gets me in an energetic place.

**What is one obscure album in your collection that everyone should know about?**

*Achilles Heel* by Pedro The Lion. It's absolutely sublime, perfect songwriting. I'm listening to it right now actually.

**What's one album you consider to be your guilty pleasure?**

I don't have guilty pleasures because I couldn't give a fuck what anyone thinks about my taste in music.

**What is the ultimate house-trashing party album?**

Probably the first Beastie Boys record, *Licensed To Ill*, for obvious reasons. I can't say I'm one for trashing people's houses though.

**What is the best album to listen to when chilling out on a Sunday morning?**

*Live At The Old Quarter, Houston, Texas* by Townes Van Zandt. It might actually be my favourite recorded performance ever; I've listened to it too many times to count. It's the sound of one of the greatest songsmiths ever, at his unadorned best.

**What's one album that made you want to start a band?**

*In Utero* by Nirvana. It made me realise that expensive production and instruments, and even fancy musicianship, didn't matter. What

matters is attitude and songwriting. My friends and I could do passable covers of this stuff in our bedroom, so we wanted to do it ourselves. Of course, it took a long time before we were anything other than rubbish. But the point still stands.

**What's one album that you wish you had performed on?**

*The Last Waltz* soundtrack by The Band. I would have been keeping great company, and marking the end of a great era.

**What's one album or song you want played at your funeral?**

"Sheep Go To Heaven" by Cake. I think you should try and keep the mood upbeat, and the lyrics to this are more than appropriate.

**What is the last album you bought and what did you think of it?**

I bought the new Failure record, *The Heart Is A Monster*. It's fucking fantastic. I have been a fan for years, and they've broken the mould when it comes to old bands reuniting for a new album; this one is immense.



## GET REEL WITH LACHLAN MARKS



## BRING ME THE HORIZON

LIVE AT WEMBLEY

SONY



The key to the survival of Bring Me The Horizon has always been their ability to progress their sound and change with the times. While many of their metalcore contemporaries from 2003 have since taken desk jobs, these Sheffield lads are merely expanding the size of the stadiums they play, adding more and more pop elements with each new record.

As the internet braces for their new release, *That's The Spirit* – early cuts promise their least “metal” effort yet – the band have gifted fans with a live DVD, captured during a performance at the renowned Wembley Arena. The last show of the *Sempiternal* album cycle, it showcases a band in transition, straddling a strange line between palatable international rockstars and gritty local heroes.

The Bring Me The Horizon Wembley experience is akin to those previously provided by peers such as Avenged Sevenfold and Bullet For My Valentine. Frontman Oli Sykes commands a minimum of four circle pits early on in the proceedings and the crowd erupts accordingly during “The House Of Wolves”. Sing-a-longs are also the order of the

day and every chorus gives the arena’s collective lungs a work out. All the classic metal band crowd interactions are wheeled out: the sit-on-the-floor-then-everyone-jump-up, the wall of death, and there’s pit calls for days.

But it’s not just a punk show. Knowing they’ve been tasked with providing a spectacle, the band are accompanied by an impressive light show and array of video screens, alternating between flashing up key lyrics and suitably demonic wolves, candles, crocodiles and the like. Air cannons get a solid work out, heralding the kick in of breakdown after breakdown, as band and crowd set about headbanging in a way that would make any chiropractor cry for a week... then start counting their piles of gold.

The audio mix is rich in every aspect; the guitars are very much in the foreground but Sykes’ impressive vocals are by no means hidden. The songs are fully fleshed out for the arena setting: big synths, big guitars, big backing vocals. The band are open about how much they don’t want to play the old material but charge through the likes of “Pray For Plagues” from their debut,

enlisting the help of their long-haired original guitarist Curtis Ward for a blistering few minutes. It stands in huge contrast to the likes of the synth-soaked, melody-rich “Sleepwalking”, showcasing how far they’ve come from the death-growling, serious shredding lads of the early 2000s.

At a solid hour-and-a-half, there’s only so many times you can be told to “make some fucking noise” or “get the fuck up” when you’re sitting on your couch watching a DVD. It does begin to grind at around the one-hour mark but that is by no means the fault of the band. People expect bang for their buck and there’s not much you can do when your raging popularity thrusts you into the kind of set you’re probably one album away from having the material for.

It does feel like the new tracks previewed so far will make a welcome addition to breaking up the relentless nature of the live set but as it stands, *Live At Wembley* acts as a great keepsake for those wanting to remember Bring Me The Horizon as they were and an exciting preview of what they’re soon to become.



## BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

PS4 • XB1 • PC

WARNER



It was a long time coming but the real 'next gen' has finally and fully arrived. Last issue we had the sweeping metal epic of *The Witcher 3* proving that the current crop of consoles were more than just shinier versions of their predecessors. Now with the arrival of *Batman: Arkham Knight* we can prove that it wasn't a fluke. Developers Rocksteady are back at the helm, thankfully, for the final instalment of the series and if you've played any of the others you'll know that they know *Batman* inside and out. If you haven't played the others, go do it now. We'll wait. With an incredible knack for putting you in the shoes, and armoured suit, of the Dark Knight, Rocksteady's vision this time is gargantuan and envelops the entirety of Gotham City. In typical *Batman* fashion, Gotham is under siege. A city-wide evacuation due to threats of a Scarecrow nerve-gas attack have turned the streets into war-zones. A bigarrily unlimited amount of near-identical henchman have run riot on the streets and the classic rogues gallery of *Batman* villains have carte-blanc to do as they please, when they

please, and how they please, while newcomer the *Arkham Knight* uses the chaos to destroy *Batman*. Thankfully, and typically, Bruce Wayne, his pals and his enormous bank account have stuck around to clean up the mess. And what a mess. This realisation of Gotham is one of the most stylish imaginings of *Batman*'s home-court that we can remember seeing. Every corner is dripping with atmosphere, from the neon signs to the grand Art Deco-inspired architecture. Rain hammers the city periodically and you'll find yourself absently atop a skyscraper looking down upon the city as if re-creating Jim Lee's comic book aesthetic was actually an objective. The Batmobile plays a huge part in navigating the city and is integrated seamlessly into *Batman*'s movements. Jump from a building, glide a few blocks, nosedive to the street and land in the cockpit of the Batmobile before tearing off down the highway. It's all so smooth and so very *Batman*. Combat, like the *Batman* games before, is a rock solid combination of stealthiness, parries and timed strikes, smoke bombs and batarangs. You can

purposefully walk toward a group of enemies and take them all on in a fist fight or slink through the shadows taking them all out before the last one even realises his mates have been thumped. A strange focus on tank battles is the only thing that really breaks the immersion along the way of being *Batman*. Here and there we could understand the Batmobile needing to release a few missiles into heavy artillery but as constant bullet sponges before exploration levels or just arbitrary tank fight roadblocks they make little sense in the world at large. The other niggle is that the game has a persistent need to tell you what button to press. Every time you're required to dive into your tool belt and figure out a problem, the game jumps up and says, "Hey press X here, mate", which would be fine as a tutorial, but it becomes patronising as the game progresses. We're trying to be *Batman* here. Those issues aside, it's such a slick production. The movies wish they could do *Batman* like this. It's constantly jaw-dropping, always action packed, brilliantly realised and most importantly, so god-damned *Batman*.



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## FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN AN EPIC SONY MERCH BUNDLE!

Here at **BLUNT** Magazine we're always keen to see our humble readership well clothed, stocked up with the latest music and never in need of a bottle opener (for your age appropriate soft drinks of course).

Thankfully, the team at Sony don't wanna see any of you young punks go cold or bored so we've been given some monstrous prize packs for your favourite shredders Bring Me The Horizon, Bullet For My Valentine and Five Finger Death Punch.

We have five packs to throw out to subscribers from this issue with the major winner taking home a Bring Me The Horizon merch bundle, the minor winner scoring a Bullet For My Valentine bundle, and three runners-up receiving a Five Finger Death Punch bundle. Better snap to it!

### BRING ME THE HORIZON PACK

HOODIE  
CHOICE OF 2X T-SHIRTS  
MESH SHORTS  
THAT'S THE SPIRIT VINYL  
THAT'S THE SPIRIT CD

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## MOTÖRHEAD BAD MAGIC BOX SET

**M**otörhead are one of the longest-standing hard-livin' rock'n'roll bands still tearing up global staging and squeezing into their tight black jeans. They've recently knocked out their 22nd album, *Bad Magic*, and are sending us one hell of a pack to give away. One lucky reader will get their paws on a limited edition *Bad Magic* box set, which includes a gatefold vinyl of new album *Bad Magic*, an ecolbook, small patch, back patch and an A1 poster, courtesy of our super pals at Warner. Need it? Tell us the name of your favourite Motörhead album and why you dig it.



## GHOST MERCH PACKS

**I**t's always best to stay on the right side of our dark lord Satan, so we recommend listening to as much Ghost as possible and dressing yourself from head to toe in their official merchandise. Thanks to the super team at Deathproof PR, we have three Ghost prize packs to give away consisting of a T-shirt, the new album *Meliora* on vinyl, and some postcards. To win, tell us the most devilish thing you've ever done!



## THE GETAWAY PLAN MERCH PACKS

**T**he Getaway Plan are back with a cracking new album, *Dark Horses*. Over the screams of excited fans we managed to ask for a little somethin' somethin' to give away to our readers. We're real nice like that. Anyways, they relented and we now have five prize packs to thrust in your general direction. If you fancy a signed T-shirt, CD and a double-pass to the show of your choice on their massive upcoming tour, let us know which song from The Getaway Plan makes you have emotional feelings.



## CAULFIELD MERCH PACKS

**S**ydney-based hardcore bros Caulfield have been doing some solid touring of late and somehow found the time to cook up a new album as well called *Outcast*. We figure y'all love some raucous chuggin' every now and again, so we yanked three prize packs from Shock/Halfcut Records to give away this issue. Each pack contains a T-shirt and a copy of *Outcast* on CD, and for your chance to win, you better tell us about the best mosh pit you've ever been in.

Write your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address and send it to: **BLUNT Comps (with the name of the comp): P.O. Box 5555, St. Leonards NSW 1590**, or enter online at **bluntmag.com.au**

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# FRANK CARTER

After a period away from music entirely, Frank Carter is fired up and raring to go for his third act. Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes are here to kick teeth in and terrify all and sundry with their debut album, *Blossom*. **BLUNT** spoke with the fearless and fantastic frontman about overcoming adversity and starting anew – again.

Words by David James Young.



**The last we heard from you was the Pure Love album *Anthems*. Its lead single, “Bury My Bones”, featured the lyric “I’m so sick of singing about hate”. Here we are, two years later, and you’re putting out one of the angriest albums of your career...**

I’m not really sure what exactly happened. I felt a need, more than a want, to go back to playing music that was a bit more direct. I wanted to make violent music. That doesn’t just mean heavy, though – I wanted something that had true power to it. I didn’t want this to just be a hardcore band or a punk band – I wanted to make something undeniable. Violence can be read a lot of ways, but it’s an exchange of power. That’s what we wanted to do. We wanted to set out and make something that sounded like it was attacking you.

**Could you talk us through the assembly of *The Rattlesnakes*?**

I wanted to have the best musicians that I knew around me. I’ve been playing music for a long time, and what comes with that is a lot of friendships

and a lot of experience. I wanted to work with people that understood me. Dean Richardson was the first guy I approached to work with me on this – he was immediately on board. Tom Mitchener was next to come on board – he’s our bassist and the producer on the album. He played keys and guitar with Pure Love. Incredible multi-instrumentalist – no frills, loves rock music, has it in his bones. Memby Jago is on drums, who used to play in The Ghost Of A Thousand. I’ve always admired his playing. I really lucked out with the group.

**You’ve mentioned in press for *Blossom* that 2014 was one of the hardest years of your life. How bad did things get?**

I was dealing with mountains of loss. I’d lost a career in music, I’d lost family members and I lost the job at a store I’d worked at for 10 years... this was two months before my baby was born, too. It felt like everything I’d worked for in my adult life had been taken from me. I had no fucking idea what I was going to do. That was when I reached

out to Dean – I needed music. I’m a creative person; nothing satisfies my soul the way music does. I spoke to my wife about it about a week after she had our baby and tried to gauge her reaction. I said, “I know this isn’t the right time, but I think I need to start another band”... and she lit up. She knew how much it meant to me and she saw the kind of year that I’d had. That’s what spurred me on.

**It’s early days yet, but do you see *Rattlesnakes* shows incorporating *Gallows* or *Pure Love* songs into the set?**

Right now, it’s all about The Rattlesnakes. It’s all about these new songs. We really enjoy playing these songs. I don’t know what the future holds – we talked about playing some *Gallows* songs, but it just didn’t feel right. I wrote those songs a long time ago. I haven’t played them for like five years now. I feel like people would talk more about them than The Rattlesnakes. I want these songs to have a chance – maybe we’ll introduce some older songs if I feel comfortable. Right now, though, I just want the focus to be on these new songs of ours. I think these new songs are better, anyways. **B**

**“WE WANTED TO SET OUT AND MAKE SOMETHING THAT SOUNDED LIKE IT WAS ATTACKING YOU.”**  
**FRANK CARTER**



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